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Rieva Lesonsky
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

For the Records

LAST YEAR'S GUIDE IS A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW, BUT WE'RE READY TO HELP YOU START, GROW AND EXCEL ON EBAY ONCE AGAIN.

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE A YEAR HAS GONE BY SINCE WE PUBlished the first issue of *Entrepreneur's eBay Startup Guide*. That issue was a record-breaker for us—it was a virtual sellout on the newsstands. (In fact, it was so hard to find, a few months after it went on sale, it was selling for $16 on—where else—eBay.)

For those of you who are eBay newbies—or are, as one man recently told me, "an eBay buyer who desperately wants to be a seller, a BIG seller"—you've come to the right place. In case you're wondering if you can really learn to start a business on eBay, the answer is an unequivocal yes. A few months ago at eBay Live! (an annual event where buyers and sellers converge with eBay employees and service providers to network and to learn—this year over 12,000 people showed up), a woman came to the *Entrepreneur* booth to thank me. After buying the first *eBay Startup Guide,* she promptly started her business. Then she sent the magazine to her sister, who also opened a business on eBay. There is nothing more gratifying to hear from a reader than how we helped change his or her life. I'm sure there are thousands just like her. And next year, you can be one of them.

You won't be alone. A new survey conducted by AC-Nielsen indicates that over 724,000 people said selling on eBay was their primary or secondary source of income. That's an increase of 68 percent in only 2 years. An additional 1.5 million folks supplement their incomes by selling on eBay.

We're not talking chump change here. This year, from January to June alone, eBay sellers sold about $10.6 billion worth of products. Why are so many people flocking to start businesses on eBay? Because it's relatively easy. All you need is a computer, a printer, a digital camera and something to sell. eBay does the rest of the work; they bring 147 million shoppers to the site. It would cost you a fortune to get your products in front of that many eyeballs any other way.

But this magazine is not just for startups. We've broken the issue into three parts: "Start," "Grow" and "Excel." If you're already selling on eBay, you'll find lots of advice on how to grow your business—and we even have information for PowerSellers, the highest level of eBay sellers.

This magazine is a collaborative effort. We go inside eBay to get insight and advice from the source—eBay experts and employees. Jim "Griff" Griffith, the dean of eBay Education, was happy to share his insider secrets with us. Griff, one of eBay's earliest sellers, has been with the company for most of its existence and certainly has a lot to tell. We also went straight to the top—Bill Cobb, president of eBay North America, shares his vision for the future. A lot of wonderful people at eBay helped us make sure our information is as accurate as possible (but this is the net, where change is the norm, so make sure you check eBay.com for up-to-the-minute information). You can also check www.entrepreneur.com/ebaycenter for more articles about running a business on eBay.

Many people contributed a lot of hours to this publication. On our end, it's expected—we're in the magazine publishing business. But many people at eBay, in addition to doing their regular jobs, were extraordinarily helpful to us. Without Mike Rudolph and Sharon Guldner, both in the education group at eBay, you wouldn't be reading this magazine.

Some people have asked me why we talk about eBay so much at *Entrepreneur*. The answer is simple: because it works. What started out as a sort of online flea market 10 years ago is now essentially the world's largest online marketplace, offering entrepreneurs another way to be successful.

But don't take my word for it. Listen to this: At eBay Live! I met a 19-year-old who, last year, took his graduation money (a bit over $2,000) and started a business on eBay. I don't want to give away too much, since we'll likely be writing about him, but this year he's on track to gross over $750,000. At 19. Jealous? Don't be. Turn the page, and learn how that kind of success can happen to you.

Rieva Lesonsky

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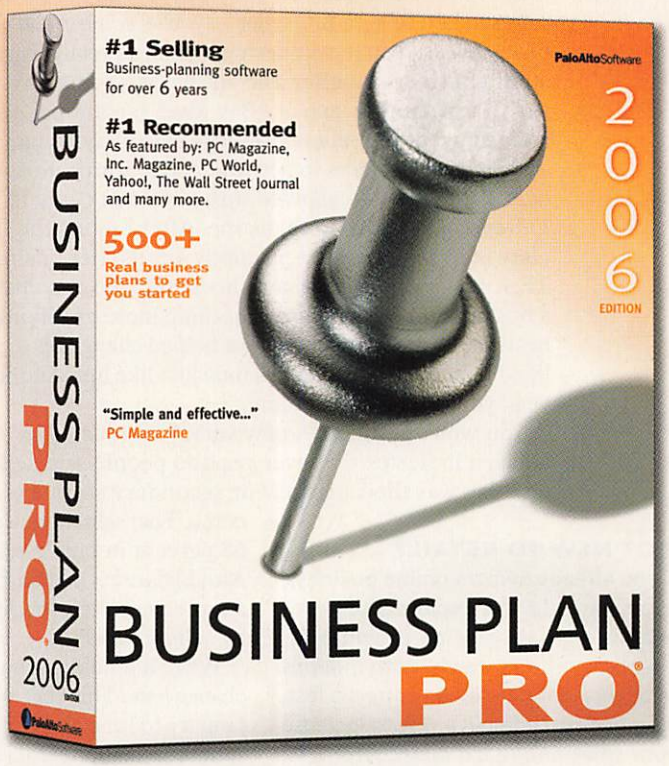

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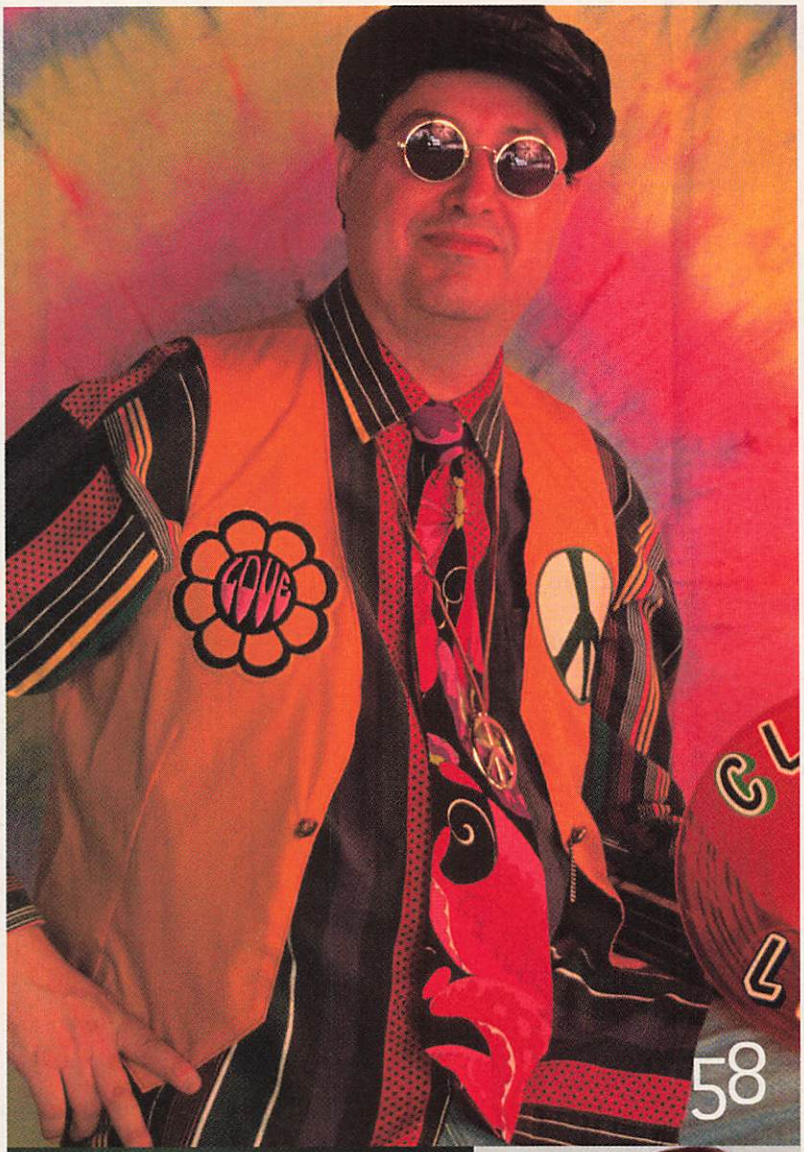

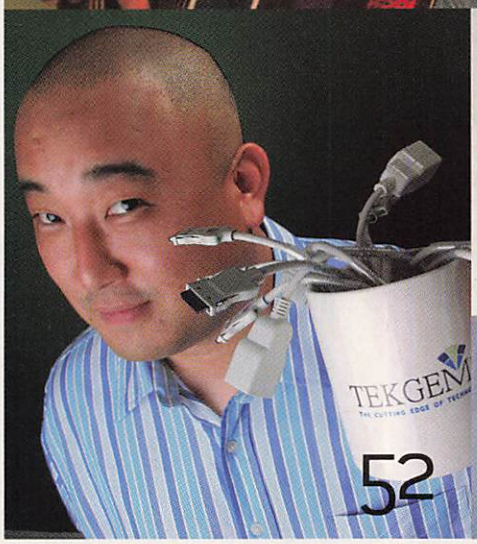

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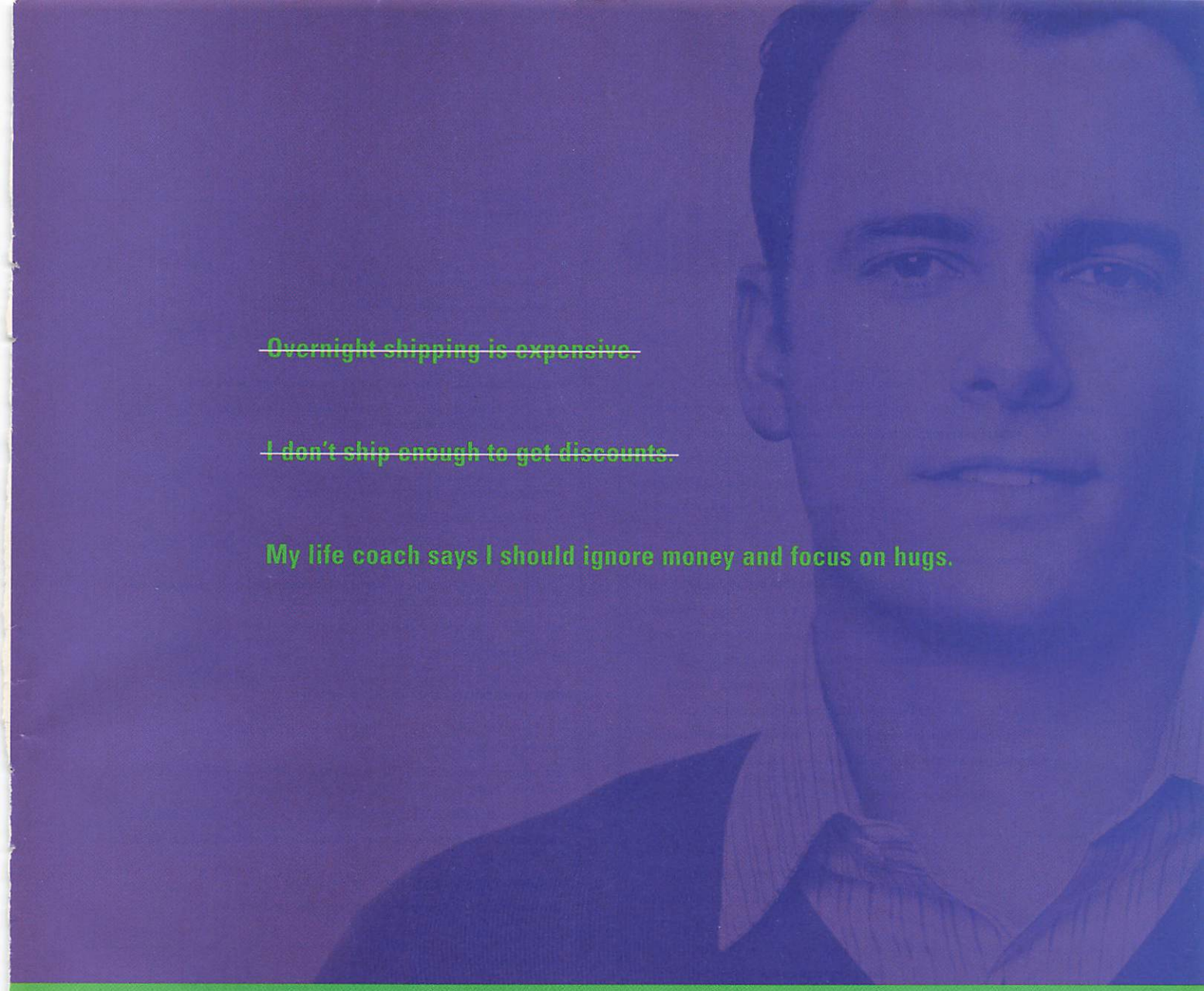

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ROAD MAP

OUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL SELLING ON EBAY WILL HAVE YOU IN BUSINESS—AND IN THE MONEY—IN NO TIME.

Welcome to *Entrepreneur's eBay Startup Guide*. Whether you're an experienced eBay seller or a complete novice, this magazine has all the information you need to build and grow a successful business on eBay. To help you easily find the information that's most relevant to you, here's a quick overview of what's inside:

If you've never sold anything on eBay before, or you're just getting started as a seller, turn to our "Start" section, beginning on page 14. There, you'll find everything you need to know to get your business on eBay up and running—where to get products, how to choose the right digital camera and more. In **"ONE STEP AT A TIME"** on page 34, you'll learn the basics of getting started on eBay. **"RULE OF THUMB"** on page 26 explains the legal and tax issues you'll need to understand when running a business on eBay; and in **"THE PRICE IS RIGHT"** on page 28, you'll find out how to price your products for maximum profits. Don't miss **"IN THE BEGINNING . . ."** on page 20. Learning how these successful eBay entrepreneurs started their businesses will instruct and inspire you.

What if you've been selling on eBay for a while and you're ready to take your business to the next level? Then turn to our "Grow" section, starting on page 49, where you'll learn how to transform your business on eBay into a real powerhouse. We'll show you the best software to help you save time and build more advanced listings; new sourcing and pricing strategies to help you fine-tune your product offerings and increase profits; and the eBay tools and features you can use to grow your business on eBay. Check out **"THE EYES HAVE IT"** on page 54 to get expert advice on designing your listings, attracting customers with your "About Me" page and revamping your eBay Store.

If you're already running a thriving business on eBay, consider this magazine a kind of refresher course. Read it cover to cover to get up to speed on new developments, great ideas and valuable tips. And make sure to turn to the "Excel" section, beginning on page 62, for the most advanced strategies and tools to help you reach even greater heights.

"CROSSING BORDERS" on page 62 will reveal what you need to know to enter the exciting world of cross-border sales. In **"STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE"** on page 66, you'll learn the most sophisticated sourcing secrets. In **"PERFECT PITCH"** on page 72, you'll discover what eBay features and tools can help maximize your sales in six different categories. And if you've got a successful retail store but aren't yet selling on eBay, **"EXTEND YOUR REACH"** on page 68 will show you how eBay can provide a turnkey online store to help you sell excess inventory, add a new sales channel and otherwise increase your profits.

Whether you're a newcomer to eBay or a seasoned seller, be sure to read our special Holiday Planner section, **"'TIS THE SEASON,"** on page 41. There, you'll discover the hottest sellers for the coming holiday season, learn the best marketing strategies to boost your holiday sales, and find everything you need to know to make holiday shipping run smoothly.

Got a question about eBay and need a quick answer? Turn to **"A HELPING HAND"** on page 80. You'll find a glossary of eBay terms; eBay shipping solutions; and information about a variety of eBay programs to help you, including eBay Learning Center, eBay Radio, eBay University and more. We spotlight the latest eBay tools and features to help you run a better business. And if you're seeking new ways to boost your revenue, you'll want to read about eBay's Education Specialist Program, Trading Assistant Program and Certified Provider Program.

You can use this guide as a road map on the path to success. Throughout the magazine, you'll meet real eBay sellers who share their success secrets, their best business tips and their stories of how eBay changed their lives. We hope they inspire you to build the business of your dreams on eBay. ■

ILLUSTRATION© CHRIS PYLE

SUCCESS
START

Trading place: "Getting on eBay is the easiest way to [do business] on the internet," says Bill Cobb.

Growing Strong

BILL COBB REVEALS HOW EBAY HAS MANAGED TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEURIAL FORCE, AND WHY IT ISN'T EVEN CLOSE TO SLOWING DOWN.

BY RIEVA LESONSKY

A few months ago at a celebration dinner at eBay Live!, I headed outside to get some air. Blocking my path was a crowd of people clamoring to get William C. "Bill" Cobb, president of eBay North America, to autograph their schedules, conference cards and even T-shirts. For a moment, I felt like I was a reporter for *Rolling Stone* at a rock concert. I had witnessed something similar last year as eBay president and CEO Meg Whitman entered a room. This comes as no surprise to legions of eBay users who are obviously grateful to the eBay corporate managers and employees who have helped them realize their entrepreneurial dreams.

Cobb oversees marketing, strategic planning and business development for all eBay's North American businesses. This includes eBay.com, eBay Canada and eBay Motors. He joined eBay in 2000 as senior vice president of global marketing and then became the senior vice president of eBay International, where he oversaw strategic planning, development and operations for eBay's businesses and investments around the world. Prior to joining eBay, Cobb held a number of key positions at PepsiCo and Tricon Restaurants International, a PepsiCo spin-off, where he was responsible for marketing the KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell brands internationally.

The eBay employees I've talked to rave about Cobb, who is an active eBay trader himself. Several months ago, I caught up with Bill, and we talked about how far eBay has come and where it's headed.

RIEVA LESONSKY: *Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, eBay has made a big transition, morphing from essentially an online flea market to the world's largest retail marketplace. What was the turning point?*

BILL COBB: The principles Pierre Omidyar, founder and chairman of the board, started with still serve us well today. It was all about trading. eBay enables buyers and sellers to come together and creates value on both sides.

I'm not sure there was one turning point. One surprising part has been the explosive success of eBay Motors. Based on first-quarter 2005 numbers, eBay Motors has more than $12.9 billion in annualized gross merchandise volume. This includes cars, motorcycles, parts and accessories.

The central notion of enabling people to trade is still intact. And now there's an incredible sense of community. Along the way, we've created tools to help both buyers and sellers. And eBay serves hobbyists as well as entrepreneurs. [A study by ACNielsen released in July, after my interview with Cobb, indicated that over 724,000 people reported that eBay is

PHOTO COURTESY: BILL COBB

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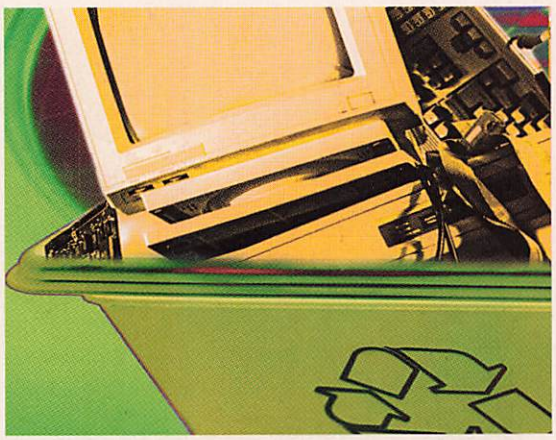


In the next three years, individuals and organizations worldwide will replace more than an estimated 400 million computers, while 75 percent of all computers ever sold remain stockpiled in closets, garages and office storage rooms. In response, eBay started the Rethink Initiative, a program dedicated to treating e-waste responsibly.

Whether properly disposing of e-waste or prolonging the life of outdated equipment, Rethink offers four options to those who want to get rid of their used computers, cell phones and other electronics: sell, donate, recycle or organize.

For those interested in selling, eBay offers a computer and cell phone value guide, as well as data erasure and migration tools. It also helps people locate an eBay drop-off store or an individual seller willing to do the work at a fraction of the product's value. Users can also take advantage of the fast cash trade-in tool to get an instant offer on the old item and arrange for free home or office pickup and free shipping.

For those who prefer to donate their goods, eBay offers links to numerous organizations willing to accept equipment in return for tax write-offs.

Should people or organizations choose to recycle their equipment, the website offers links to lists of local recycling centers that properly dispose of the possibly harmful substances.

The website also provides direction for those who want to become involved at a local level, linking to a number of resources and programs that can help you find other individuals and organizations looking to make a difference in your area. For more information, check out http://rethink.ebay.com.

—Jeran Wittenstein

We don't sit around and say, "Where are we planning to take the company?" We follow the leader here: the eBay community. We're going into a variety of areas in the small-business arena to help small businesses trade with other small businesses.

The fun part is to see where the people take you. In 2004, the fastest-growing category was Health & Beauty. We recently launched Want It Now, [where buyers post requests for hard-to-find items]. There's something magical going on [when you can] connect buyers and sellers more directly.

either their primary or secondary source of income.] We recently launched some new programs—Seller OnRamp, Reseller Marketplace and ProStores—to further assist eBay business owners. And our Customer Care program is there to help sellers as they evolve their businesses on eBay.

LESONSKY: *Time magazine recently said that Meg Whitman "has a vision for a new kind of company." What is the vision for the next 10 years?*

COBB: An obvious change will be the further expansion internationally as trade crosses borders. Currently, cross-border trade on eBay is approximately 15 percent.

LESONSKY: *eBay has become a "must-be" place for small-business owners. What makes eBay so vital, especially for new entrepreneurs? What's the smartest thing a startup eBay entrepreneur can do?*

COBB: eBay is a transparent marketplace. You must listen and respond to the community. For example, we started the Seller OnRamp Program, which provides one-to-one consultation, education and training to help our sellers. All it takes is a phone call to walk you through. And many of the customer support people are PowerSellers [an elite level of eBay sellers]. If you already have a business and want to expand, eBay can be an additional sales channel. You can set up an eBay Store.

You can get a business up and running pretty quickly on eBay. The functionality of PayPal [an online payment system owned by eBay] helps. Over 75 percent of eBay transactions in the U.S. are paid through PayPal.

LESONSKY: *In the past few months, more competitors have been aggressively targeting eBay. What are you doing to fight back?*

COBB: [Recent] fee changes were a catalyst for us to do some things we hadn't done. We had fallen into corporate-speak. Now we talk in a conversational language. We enhanced customer support. I've become visible on the Community boards. We're going back to our community roots.

LESONSKY: *Why, in your opinion, is eBay still the number-one choice for online entrepreneurs? And is it harder to expand and grow now that you've become a cultural icon?*

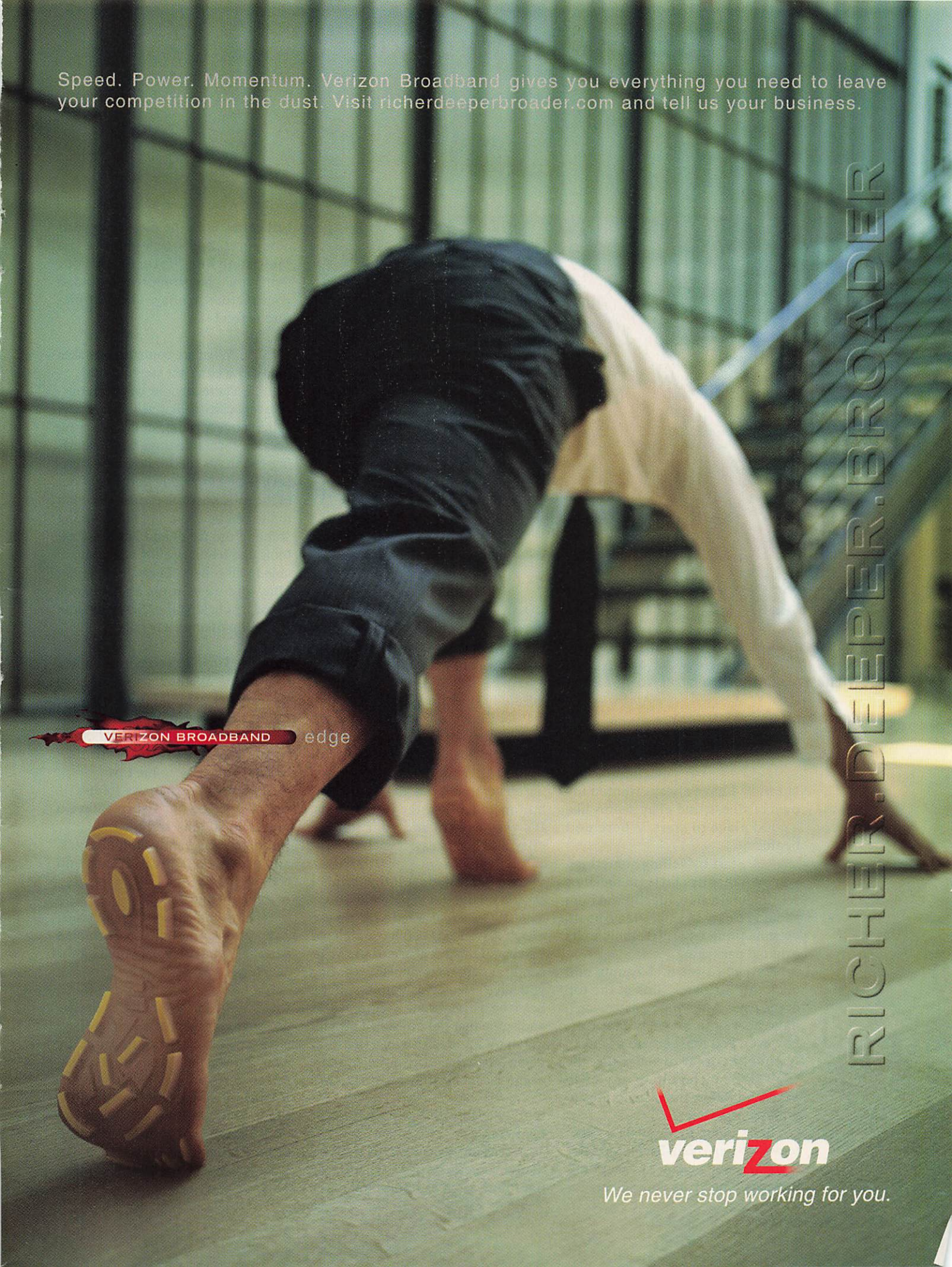
COBB: When you consider the entrepreneurial value proposition—the amount of buyers, traffic, eyeballs, the innovations and the tools—the eBay brand stands for something. All that takes an investment. eBay is a value for people. It draws people. We remain relevant, interesting and fun.

It's not more difficult to grow. We want to make sure we're still appropriate. We need to be accessible so people will come. And we will continue to listen and respond.

LESONSKY: *Do you think online sales will replace the brick-and-mortar store for smaller entrepreneurs? Will the Wal-Martization of America continue to drive smaller businesses from the shopping centers and strip malls onto the net?*

COBB: The internet affords smaller entrepreneurs who are being squeezed out by big businesses with a big opportunity. eBay is leveling the playing field, enabling all businesses to have the same chance to compete. ■

ILLUSTRATION: VANDANA DEVIREDDY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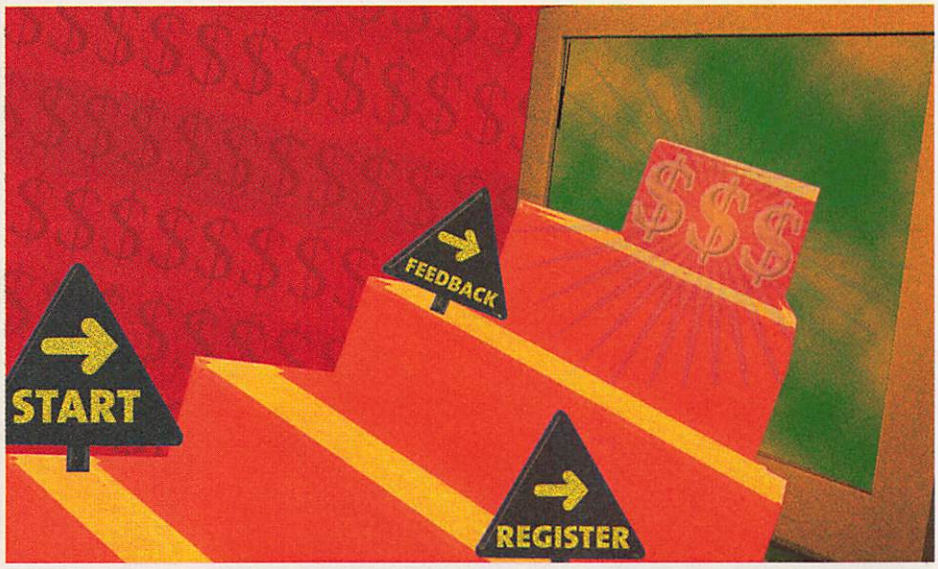

Starting Smart

JIM GRIFFITH, EBAY AUTHOR AND EDUCATOR, ANSWERS YOUR BURNING QUESTIONS ABOUT STARTING A BUSINESS ON EBAY.

BY JIM GRIFFITH

QUESTION: I have always wanted my own business, and eBay seems like a good place to start. Where do I begin?
ANSWER: Start by selling something you own that has little financial or sentimental value. Ideally, the item should be easy to ship, and it should be something new, preferably in its original packaging.

Next, go to www.ebay.com and click the "Register" link at the top of the page. After you register, you'll have access to all eBay features; however, you must create a Seller's Account in order to sell. Click the "Sell" link at the top of any eBay page, and follow the instructions to register as a seller.

Then sign up for PayPal by going to www.paypal.com. PayPal, an eBay company, allows you to accept online payments from your buyers for any eBay items. This is the safest and fastest way to get paid on eBay.

QUESTION: How do I list my item?
ANSWER: Click the "Sell" link at the top of any eBay page. Here, you'll find a host of information on successful selling. After you learn all about listing an item, click the "Sell Your Item" button and follow the instructions. It's very easy to add your item to eBay, and it gets easier each time.

QUESTION: How do I know what I should charge for my items?
ANSWER: Once registered, you can use eBay's Advanced Search (Completed Listings Only) feature to view recently closed items similar to the one you have selected as your test item. Scan the list, and view a few that sold and some that did not sell. This will give you an idea of what the item might sell for on eBay, as well as show examples of "best listing practices."

QUESTION: How do I post pictures of my item?
ANSWER: The easiest way is to use a digital camera, or use a scanner for flat items, such as books and baseball cards. Save the picture to your computer, and when you use the "Sell Your Item" form to list your item, you'll be prompted to upload your picture to eBay. The first picture is free!

QUESTION: What are common mistakes to avoid when first starting out?
ANSWER: There are four common mistakes specific to eBay selling and new sellers: overpricing items (starting auction-format listings with a starting bid that's too high for the market); listing too many items right out of the gate; not paying close attention to the competition; and not adopting some of the time- and labor-saving tools and features eBay makes available to all sellers. These include My eBay and other tools and features found by clicking the "Services" link at the top of any eBay page.

QUESTION: How do I convince buyers to trust me as a new seller if I have no feedback reputation on eBay?
ANSWER: Even with little or no feedback, you can instill buyer confidence by the way you present your new business on eBay. Some tips:

- Start with inexpensive items.
- Make sure your listings have a professional look and feel.
- Clearly state shipping charges, and provide a detailed return and refund policy.
- Accept PayPal.
- Build your feedback by purchasing a few items on eBay. To become a better seller, note what you look for as a buyer.

QUESTION: Do I need a business license or a tax resale number to sell on eBay?
ANSWER: These are not required by eBay, but you may need either a business license or a tax resale number if your local or state laws require them. Your state's tax website and local chamber of commerce would be two good places to start. ■

JIM "GRIFF" GRIFFITH *is author of* The Official eBay Bible *and dean of eBay Education.*

ILLUSTRATION: VANDANA DEVIREDDY

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Picture This

POST GREAT SHOTS OF YOUR PRODUCTS WITH THESE AFFORDABLE DIGITAL CAMERAS.

BY AMANDA C. KOOSER

It's all about the visuals. Good photos can help move your products for higher prices. They can also help cut down on the number of questions from potential buyers. A digital camera is therefore a must. Since we're dealing with the internet, super-high megapixels aren't an absolute necessity. But you still might want to look into a higher-resolution camera if you need to capture very fine details or plan to use your camera in other areas of your business (or personal life).

HP PHOTOSMART M417

Fortunately, high-quality cameras are very affordable, and there is an option to fit every need and budget. You can narrow the possibilities by figuring out your budget first. The Concord Eye-Q 4363z, for example, gets you 4 megapixels of resolution for a very affordable $150 (all prices street). Small features can make a big difference. The Epson L-500V comes with a 2.5-inch LCD screen for framing and viewing pictures. You can get immediate feedback as to whether your shot worked out. The Casio Exilim EX-Z57 tops out with a 2.7-inch LCD.

Photographing very small items can be a challenge. The Canon PowerShot S60 can handle even tiny objects, thanks to a macro feature that lets you shoot objects from as close as 2 inches. It's also handy for photographing large items like cars from a short distance. The "Shopping List" below highlights a few models that can manage just about any eBay duty. Other camera manufacturers to check into include Kodak (www.kodak.com), Nikon (www.nikonusa.com), Olympus (www.olympusamerica.com) and Sony (www.sony.com). They all have extensive camera lines ranging from inexpensive point-and-shoot options to advanced models with lots of manual controls. Visit your local retailer to test-drive cameras in person and find one that fits your business needs—then you can buy one on eBay. ■

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Shopping List

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Canon PowerShot S60	www.usa.canon.com (800) OK-CANON	5 megapixels	3.6x	CompactFlash, slim body design	$449
Casio Exilim EX-Z57	www.casio.com (800) 836-8580	5 megapixels	3x optical	SD card slot, 2.7-inch LCD	$379
Concord Eye-Q 4363z	www.concord-camera.com (954) 331-4200	4 megapixels	3x optical	SD card slot, assist light feature	$150
Epson L-500V	www.epson.com (800) GO-EPSON	5 megapixels	3x optical, 4x digital	SD card, 2.5-inch LCD	$349
Hewlett-Packard Photosmart M417	www.hp.com (800) 752-0900	5.2 megapixels	3x optical, 7x digital	SD card, adaptive lighting technology	$200

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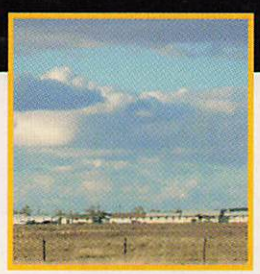

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Hidden Treasures

HOW TO FIND SMALL, EVERYDAY BARGAINS THAT CAN TRANSLATE TO BIG PROFITS ON EBAY.

BY JULIE MONAHAN

You've read the success stories, and now you're ready to move from eBay buyer to eBay seller. The challenge is finding products to sell that people will buy, preferably at a premium price.

Start the search under your own roof, scanning your closets, rummaging around in your garage and opening those long-forgotten boxes in the attic.

Once you've exhausted these options, consider your own skills and interests for ideas on finding product. Tim Stallard, 35, and Todd McGohan, 40, made their golf addiction the link to a successful business, Proshopwarehouse.com (eBay User ID: proshopwarehouse), which had about $10 million in sales last year. They began by selling their own used golf equipment. Satisfied with the response, they turned next to their network of golf enthusiasts for more supply. The first stop was a golf pro shop at a local country club, where a friend sold them $5,000 worth of liquidated equipment. "From there, we started looking for more people we knew in the golf business," Stallard says. The effort stretched from the company's base in Franklin, Ohio, to other areas of the state and beyond.

Product sources are only as limited as your imagination. A friend eager to be rid of a dusty record collection could turn into an eBay windfall. More traditional sources are garage sales, thrift shops, going-out-of-business sales, real estate and storage site auctions, and even junkyards. "You can make an extra $500 to $1,000 a month going to garage sales and thrift shops," says Skip McGrath, eBay PowerSeller and principal of Vision-One Press in Anacortes, Washington, which publishes McGrath's newsletter and books about eBay. "Virtually anything sells."

What's old is new: Tim Stallard (l.) and Todd McGohan started their business on eBay by selling used golf equipment.

Photo Courtesy: Proshopwarehouse.com

It helps to be a shopaholic with a knack for finding deals like Margaret Demopoulos, 40, of Durham, New Hampshire (eBay User ID: goatbeard). She haunts local retailers and outlets looking for deeply discounted items, reasoning that the greater discount, the greater the potential profit. One past success was with LeapPads, a children's educational toy, bought for $9 each and sold for $21 each on eBay.

Sun W. Kim, 30, recognized an eBay opportunity in a bucket full of computer cables at a Los Angeles flea market. He paid 50 cents a cable and sold them on eBay for $10 each. Another flea market visit turned up older versions of the popular Crystal Reports business reporting software in unopened packages for $2 each that Kim sold for an average of $350 each. Kim (eBay User ID: tekgems) has since started sourcing straight from manufacturers (check out "Bigger Deals" on page 52). His San Francisco company, TekGems, grossed $300,000 in 2004.

Marsha Collier, author of *Starting an eBay Business for Dummies*, and her daughter Susan used their knowledge of the fashion world to take advantage of $450 Fendi handbags selling for $200 at Costco. They sold for $350 each on eBay. Says Collier, "Most success stories on eBay are from people who sell what they know." ■

JULIE MONAHAN is a writer in Seattle whose articles on small business and emerging technology have appeared in numerous consumer and trade magazines.

FIND IT ONLINE

WHERE TO GO TO SOURCE PRODUCTS ONLINE:

www.fleamarketguide.com: directory of U.S. flea markets

www.tuesdaymorning.com: brand-name and designer closeouts

http://auctions.samsclub.com: great deals on closeouts

www.ustreas.gov/auctions: one of several government auctions

www.biglotswholesale.com: closeout merchandise at wholesale prices

Source: Starting an eBay Business for Dummies, *Marsha Collier*

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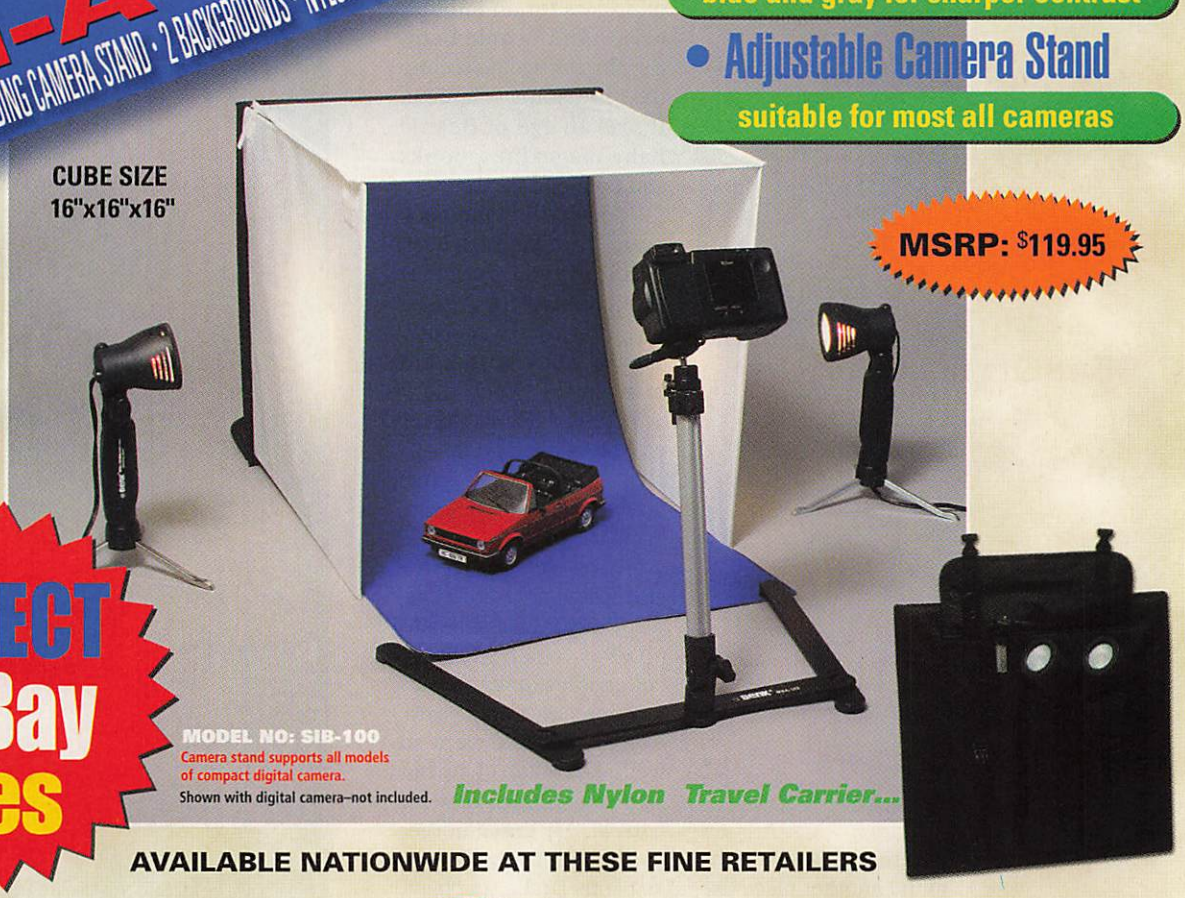

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IN THE

BY GEOFF WILLIAMS

Lynn Dralle got her start on eBay the way many people did in the late 1990s—she was searching for Beanie Babies to buy.

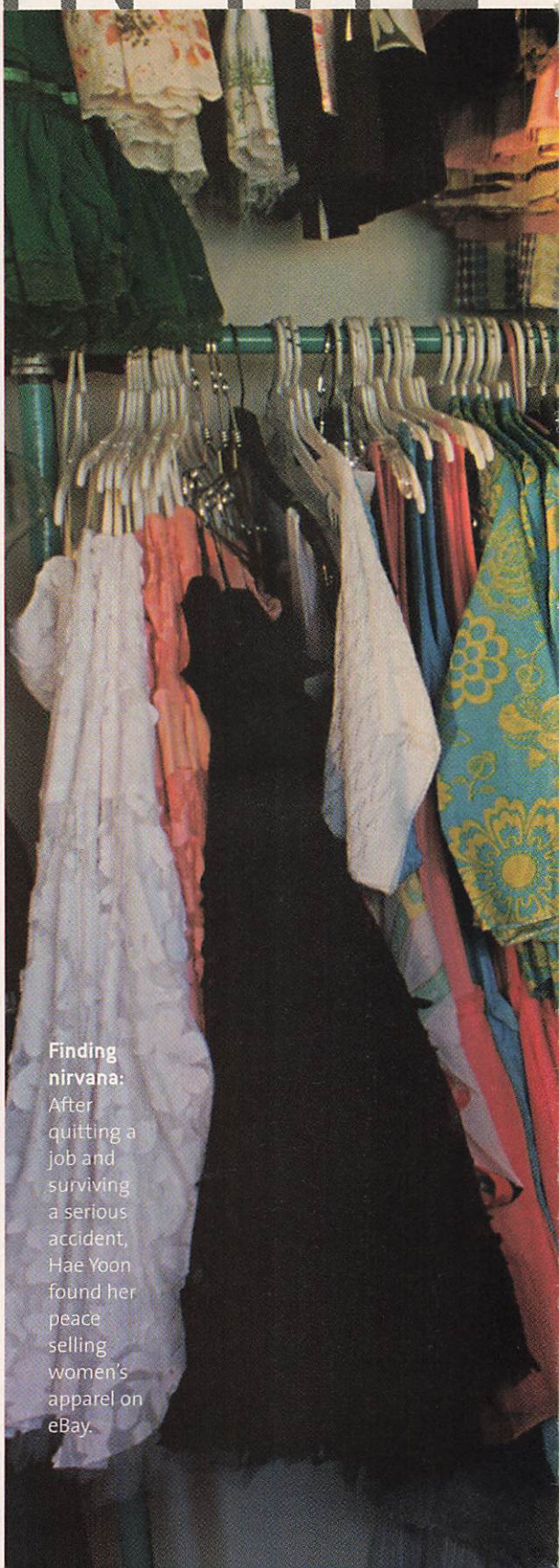
For those who are too young to remember, or for those whose pop-culture memories are fuzzy, this was a decade in which tiny, furry stuffed animals created by Ty Inc. were decreed collectible items because of their limited availability and short manufacturing lives. It was an age in which otherwise rational people were suddenly buying the stuffed animals by the dozen and occasionally paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for an individual stuffed Beanie Baby, certain they would recoup their investments tenfold. It was an age of Beanie Baby magazines, books and collectors' cases.

AN IDEA, A NEED, A PASSION, A CALLING—EVERYONE HAS A REASON FOR STARTING A BUSINESS ON EBAY. HERE ARE 4 ENTREPRENEURS' STORIES.

"They will come back again," the Palm Desert, California, entrepreneur says confidently, citing a Beanie Baby she recently saw on eBay with a bid of $1,150.

Whether Beanie Babies will be as good an investment as old coins or comic books remains to be seen, but in that period, they were a profitable venture for entrepreneurs like Dralle, who bought Beanie Babies on eBay to sell as future collectibles in her grandmother's antiques store. The experience went so well, she couldn't help but start shopping on eBay for herself. "My grandmother bought me a vase when I was 13, and I had never found another piece like it," explains Dralle, 42. "Now, I have 13 of those vases, and every time I buy one, it reminds me of my grandmother."

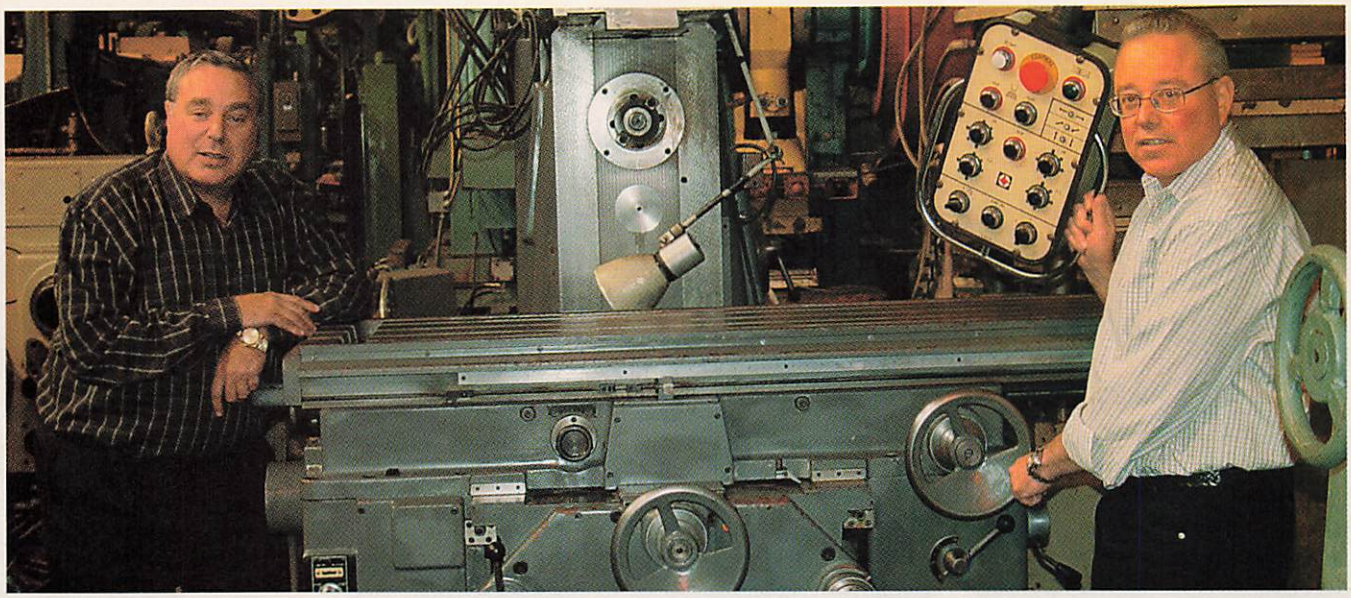
Silly, sublime, sentimental or strange, every entrepreneur has a story about how he or she started on eBay. While the tales are different, one plot element remains the same: eBay improved their quality of life—not to mention their income.



Finding nirvana: After quitting a job and surviving a serious accident, Hae Yoon found her peace selling women's apparel on eBay.

PHOTO © SCOTT C. SCHULMAN

BEGINNING...



Restoring luster: Gene Valitt (l.) and Art Lazarus saved their machine company by selling their "dead inventory" on eBay.

NOMAD NO MORE

Six years ago, Tim Siegel, then 30, was going places. Specifically, he was driving from Minnesota to Guatemala, after a friend convinced him that he could make a lot of money selling medical equipment down there. It was worth a shot. Siegel's degree in criminology had led him into a job managing telemarketers, which he considered the worst job he ever had, and then into management at a hospitality company. The upside of his second job was that he got to visit far-flung lands like Guam and Malaysia. So when a friend convinced him of the financial gains to be found selling medical equipment in Guatemala, Siegel figured he would, at the very least, get to do something he loves: travel.

True enough. But while the 3,000-mile trip by truck—and school bus—was at first an adventure, it eventually became exhausting. Siegel's friend had been right. Because Guatemala's infrastructure is so poor, those with money are willing to pay top dollar for what they need to buy. As Siegel says, "If a surgical table is worth $1,000 here, an end user in Guatemala would pay two to three times [that]. That is also true with vehicles or just about anything else. So many people currently export down there, I would guess it's very tough to make a profit now."

But not back then. Siegel would always sell his vehicle after all the goods were sold, then fly home. But it was still a challenging journey.

In 1999, the same friend suggested he try selling his merchandise on eBay, and Siegel leapt at the chance. A fetal monitor bought for $250 sold for $500, and Siegel knew he was never going back to Guatemala. Today, Siegel has an eBay-based company called Matrix Medical (www.matrixmedical.net) that sells mostly medical and dental equipment to buyers around the world, with about 5 percent of sales from other products.

Siegel hopes to eventually have his own warehouse, a bigger truck and employees. In a recent month, he brought in $36,000, and his 2005 gross sales should be just under half a million dollars.

"It's nice not risking my life driving 3,000 miles," says Siegel. "These days, I'll buy anything, because I know I can sell it. My confidence level has risen a lot. When you buy something for $500 and can sell it for $8,000, it really blows your mind. I'm sure without eBay, I'd have been successful, but it's hard to say what would have happened. Would I have kept going to Guatemala and crashed somewhere? Now I can buy something and literally have the money for it today, as opposed to waiting." And driving.

FREEDOM TO CREATE

In early 2003, Hae Yoon was riding her dirt bike in the hills of Bishop, California, with her friends, enjoying the rush of the wind in her face. Far off was the highway, with a truck barreling down it, and Yoon couldn't resist trying to race it. My family shouldn't worry, Yoon thought, giddy. Riding a dirt bike is perfectly safe, as long as you know what you're doing . . . .

Then she noticed the barbed-wire fence in front of her.

Yoon, now 32, had quit her job as a marketing manager for an event-planning company in November 2002. She was planning to start her own business in the yoga industry, when she discovered dirt biking isn't really perfectly safe. After a successful back surgery, Yoon moved in with her brothers, recovering and living off the money she had saved for her business. By the time she felt up to striking out on her own, it was spring 2004. She moved back to Los Angeles and attempted to reignite the business she had almost started.

She planned to produce yoga-mat bags, among other yoga-related accessories, but after spending several thousand dollars on some prototypes, she realized it was too expensive a venture to attempt—and besides, her savings were almost depleted. With Christmas coming and no career to speak of, she was beginning to feel a bit demoralized.

About that time, she found some cashmere sweaters at a great discount and started selling them on eBay just for the fun of it. "It was just something I stumbled on through a friend," says Yoon. "He mentioned a place where

Photo Courtesy: Machinery Values

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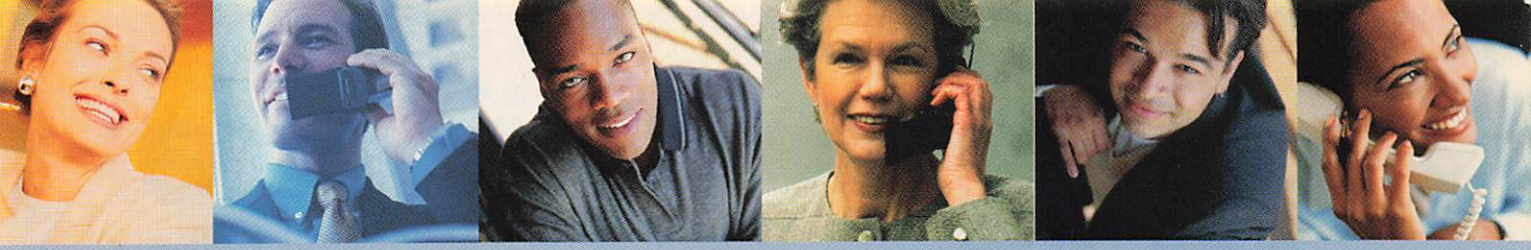

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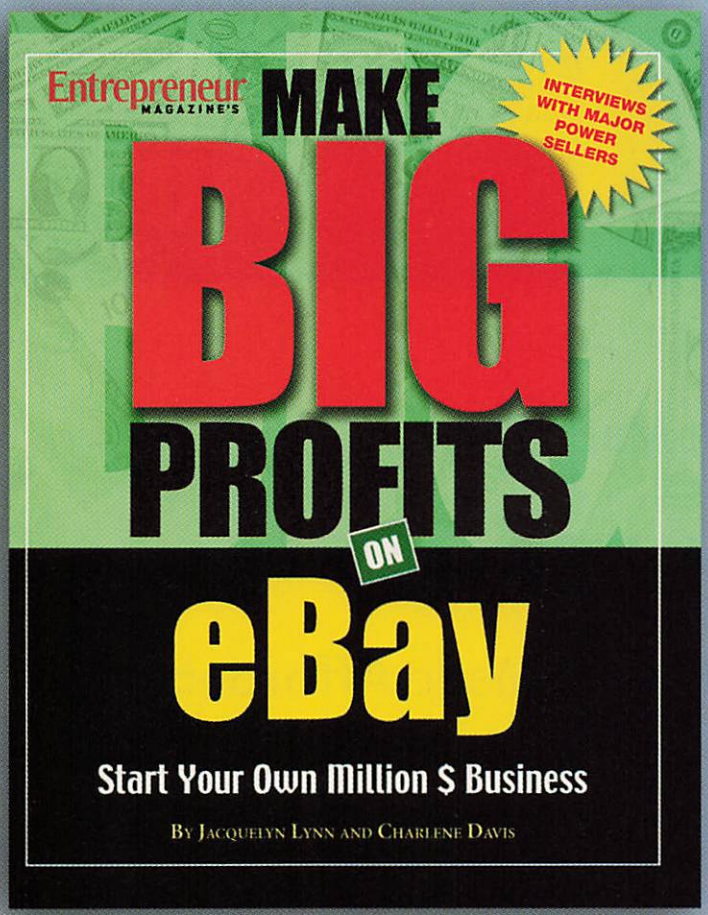

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he got all this great merchandise for outrageous prices. I put [the sweaters] on eBay to see what would happen, and I sold out in 48 hours."

Yoon was enlightened. Yoga wasn't the answer; eBay was. She began selling women's apparel full time this January, and already, her business is on track to pull in between $300,000 and $400,000 in 2005. "The benefits have been enormous," says Yoon, whose hallway and dining room are full of inventory, though she eventually hopes to move to an office and have employees. "I want to work 10 times harder than I ever did at my previous jobs. It feels great to know you're creating something and not working on a project for somebody else."

BRICK, MORTAR AND MORALE

The 21st century had arrived, but nobody at Machinery Values felt like celebrating. In 2001, founder and CEO Gene Valitt, now 64, was afraid he would be putting up a going-out-of-business sign instead of celebrating the company's 30th anniversary. The industrial machine dealer in Harrison, New Jersey, had gone from 70 employees to 35, from making $20 million annually to less than $10 million. The way it looked, the future partners—Valitt's sons Andrew and David, 39 and 36, respectively, and Rick Lazarus, 37, who all work in various capacities at Machinery Values—had little future to look toward.

COO Art Lazarus, who had become a partner in 1995, kept trying to think of a way to stop the damage. "We went through a very difficult time—the recession, 9/11 and a three-and-a-half year period where business was really lousy in our industry," says Art, 59. "People weren't expanding, prices dropped, and our revenue dropped. We were losing money."

The breakthrough came when Art began to think about their "dead inventory," $250,000 worth of metalworks equipment and odds and ends. It was all perfectly good material, but was inexpensive enough that they could never justify spending advertising money to alert customers it was available. So they just kept collecting a warehouse full of items. "We said, 'Business is lousy, we're sitting around here—we should put people to work clearing this stuff out, cleaning it, photographing it and selling it on eBay,'" Art recalls.

Everything sold, to the point where Machinery Values was bringing in as much as $20,000 a month. Art started scrapping the catalogs they produced two or three times a year—which cost the company about $100,000 each time—and began marketing their products through eBay instead. Now, a few years later, the company brings in over $1 million a year—or about 15 percent of its sales—from eBay. Art says eBay has also introduced many customers to their business, bringing traffic into their warehouse. Counting indirect sales, Art credits eBay for bringing in 30 percent to 40 percent of business—and saving the company.

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME

Dralle believes eBay has saved her quality of life. And why shouldn't she? After her grandmother passed away in 2000 at the age of 88, Dralle kept the antiques store running for a while, but had to close up shop two years later. The overhead was too high, and a lifetime of memories lingered. Running the business without her grandmother around just wasn't the same. Meanwhile, Dralle had visions of working out of her house so she could be with her kids.

Today, Dralle's website, www.thequeenofauctions.com, links to her eBay Store, which brings in approximately $250,000 a year selling antiques. That's not even counting her earnings from her series of eBay books with titles like *The 100 Best Things I've Sold on eBay*. And just as she hoped, she sees her children a lot more than she ever did when she put in 50 hours a week at the store.

Baby love: For Lynne Dralle, eBay means the freedom to spend more time with her kids.

"Now, I take them to school and pick them up, and they know they can come in [my home office] and do their homework," she says. When they aren't in school, they can ride around with Dralle, who spends much of her time canvassing garage sales and looking for treasures she can sell on eBay. She cites a recent example of a wood carving of a bird, which she recognized as a piece of work by a master carver. She paid $2 for it, but plenty of collectors were quick to recognize its value. The top bid for the carving was $2,052. "Those are the ones that make me jump up and down," says Dralle. "Really, I'm just so happy that I can live wherever I want, and I love what I'm doing." It's one of those intangibles that nobody can put a price on. ■

GEOFF WILLIAMS *is a writer in Loveland, Ohio. Contact him at gwilliams1@cinci.rr.com.*

PHOTO COURTESY: LYNN DRALLE

RULE of THUMB

BY CLIFF ENNICO

ONLINE RETAIL IS NOT A FREE-FOR-ALL. GET YOUR BUSINESS OFF TO A SMOOTH START—AND STAY OUT OF TROUBLE—BY UNDERSTANDING SOME BASIC LEGAL AND TAX RULES.

Rules? You mean there are rules? Sorry, but the answer is yes. A lot of people think the internet is a parallel universe free from regulation of any kind, and they are shocked—shocked!—to learn that you can get into legal trouble if you're not careful.

When doing business on eBay, you are engaged in a retail business and are therefore subject to all federal, state and local laws and taxes that apply to retail businesses. In addition, eBay has its own set of rules—and they're often more restrictive than what the law permits.

The following legal and tax tips will help you get off on the right foot:

1. NAME YOUR BUSINESS. You cannot use someone else's name for your business without their consent, so make sure your business name is truly original.

First, you should visit the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office website (www.uspto.gov) to make sure no one else has registered a trademark for the name. If someone has, it is absolutely illegal for you to use that name in commerce. If nobody has, consider getting a federal trademark—it should cost less than $1,000 and will prevent anyone else from stealing your name down the road.

Then, make sure your name is available as a web address by checking Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com) or Register.com. Next, check with your state secretary of state's office (www.iaca.org/members.htm) to make sure no corporation or limited liability company is already using your name. Then, visit your town or county clerk's office to ensure no sole proprietor or partnership has filed a trade name or dba certificate for their business under the same name. Finally, don't use the word *eBay* or anything similar to it in your business name.

Don't steal someone else's name, even if he or she hasn't taken steps to protect it legally. Competitors may be able to sue you for infringing a common law trademark or "misappropriating their trade dress," especially if they're also planning to sell online and establish a national or international brand under that name.

2. FORM A LEGAL ENTITY. Most eBay sellers are sole proprietors or informal partnerships between spouses or family members. However, if you're partnering with someone you're not related to or don't trust 100 percent, you may want to consider forming a corporation or LLC so your personal assets will be protected against any lawsuit that results from your partner's bad behavior.

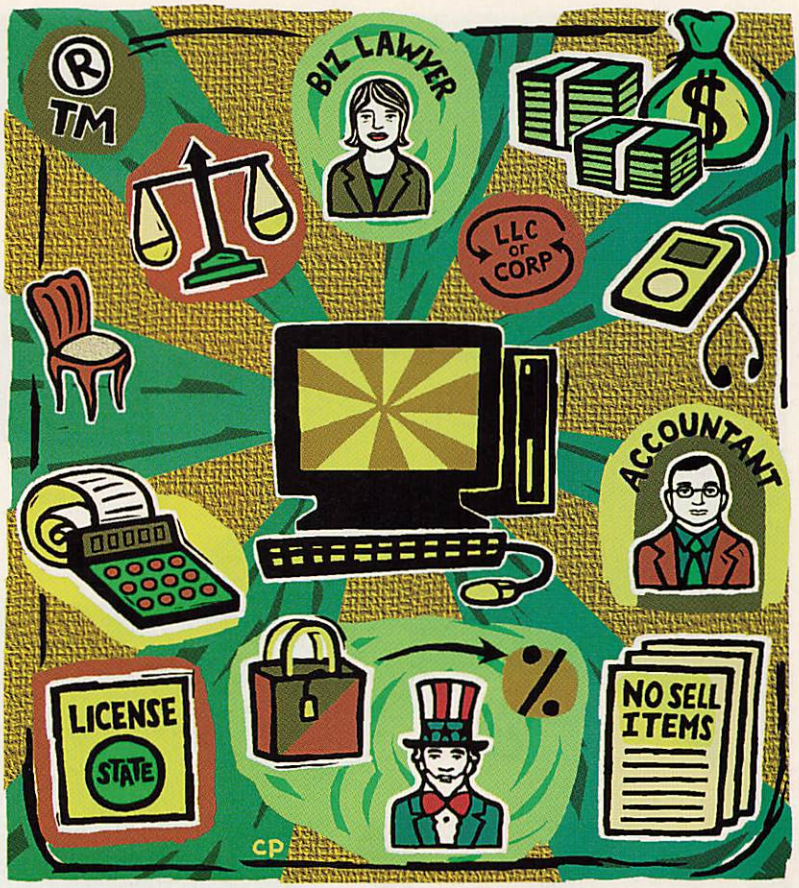
3. GET A LICENSE, IF NEEDED. If you are taking other people's consignments or buying large quantities of goods for resale on eBay, you may need to get an auctioneer's license from your state. (For details, see my article "Do You Need an Auction License to Sell on eBay?" at www.entrepreneur.com/ebusiness/auctionlicense.) Also, if you are dealing in goods that, if abused, may injure someone (such as alcohol, tobacco, cars, boats, firearms or used manufacturing equipment), you may need a special license from the state to sell them.

4. MAKE SURE YOU CAN SELL IT LEGALLY ON EBAY. Check out a detailed list of items that cannot legally be sold on eBay at http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/item_allowed.html. If there is a risk that you are selling items (such as knockoff handbags, bootleg CDs or "genuine Rolex watches" you purchased for $5 apiece) that may infringe on someone else's trademark, eBay's Verified Rights Owner (VeRO) Program (http://pages.ebay.com/help/confidence/programs-vero-ov.html) enables you to contact the trademark owner (and vice versa) to verify that the goods are indeed genuine.

5. REMEMBER THAT A BID IS A LEGAL CONTRACT. If there's at least one bid on your item, eBay discourages you from withdrawing the listing unless you e-mail the buyer(s) and give a genuine reason for doing so. (For example, "An expert told us this item wasn't what we thought it was, and we have withdrawn the item for further study.") Similarly, if you are bidding on someone else's merchandise, you can withdraw your bid only for a limited number of reasons, or you must contact the seller and obtain permission to withdraw.

6. AVOID FRAUD AND ILLEGAL LISTING PRACTICES. When setting up your eBay listings, don't make extravagant claims about the goods you are selling. These may be construed as legal warranties, and your buyers will have the right to return the goods (or flame you on eBay's Feedback Forum) if the goods don't strictly comply with your descriptions. Even if you don't make any express warranties about your merchandise, the law may imply certain warranties unless you specifically include a disclaimer about them on each eBay listing page.

If you're tempted to engage in illegal or questionable listing practices—for example, having a "shill" (a friend, neigh-



bor or family member with a different e-mail address) bid against legitimate bidders in your listings to drive the prices up artificially—don't even think about it! In many states, eBay has teamed up with the attorneys general to shut down sellers who break the rules. If you're caught, not only will you be permanently booted off eBay, but you may also be subject to criminal prosecution for auction fraud.

7. WATCH OUT FOR TAXES. If you put something up for sale on eBay and the winning bidder is a resident of your state, you must pay your state's sales tax on that transaction. That means you must register your business with your state tax authority. You should also place the following statement on each listing page: "Residents of [your state] must add ____% sales tax to their winning bid amount." In addition, eBay provides an option to include your state sales tax during the listing process. If you don't warn your buyers that you will add sales tax to their winning bid, you may not be allowed to pass the sales tax on to your buyer, but will instead have to deduct it from your profit on the sale.

You will also have to deliver a resale certificate to the vendors from whom you buy items for sale on eBay so that they don't charge you sales taxes. The form is usually available as a free download from your state tax authority's website. (To find this site, go to www.natptax.com/state_information.html, and click on your state; when you get to your state's site, click on "Forms and Publications.")

Any profits you make from your business on eBay must be reported as income on your federal and state income tax returns. If you lose money, you may be able to deduct your losses against your income from other sources (such as a day job), provided the IRS views your eBay activities as a business and not a hobby. (See my article "Do You Have a Business or Just a Hobby?" at www.entrepreneur.com/features/businessorhobby.)

8. KEEP IN MIND, DIFFERENT LAWS AND CUSTOMS APPLY WHEN SELLING ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES. For example:

- **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE** for preparing the customs paperwork when shipping to a foreign country.
- **MANY FOREIGN COUNTRIES,** especially in Europe, require you to register as a local business and pay local taxes if you are selling large quantities of goods to their citizens.
- **SOME COUNTRIES,** particularly in Africa and Asia, have restrictions on the amount of currency their citizens can transfer abroad.

Make sure you hire a good accountant and business lawyer before starting any business online, and stay in touch with them as your business grows.

This article contains general information only and should not be relied on as legal, tax or financial advice, which can be furnished only by a qualified professional licensed in your state. ■

SUITING UP: A LEGAL CHECKLIST

Launching a new business is time-consuming enough—you don't have the time to become a legal expert, too. Here's a checklist of legal and tax tips to help you start your business on eBay:

- **FORM A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY** for your business, especially if you are in partnership with someone other than your spouse.
- **OPEN A PRIVATE MAILBOX** at your local UPS Store or post office and use that, instead of your home address, as your business address.
- **REGISTER YOUR BUSINESS** name or dba with your town clerk or county clerk's office.
- **GET A FEDERAL TAX ID NUMBER** for your business from www.irs.gov—don't use your Social Security number.
- **HIRE A GOOD ACCOUNTANT,** a good business lawyer and a good insurance agent.
- **REGISTER FOR ALL STATE AND LOCAL TAXES**—especially sales and use taxes—that apply to your business. (Your accountant can help with this.)
- **FIND OUT IF YOU NEED A STATE LICENSE** to sell on eBay if you are taking consignments or handling goods that could injure people if abused.
- **LEARN QUICKBOOKS PRO** or another bookkeeping software program. Your local community college probably offers an evening course, and the tuition fee may be tax-deductible.
- **LEARN WHICH BUSINESS EXPENSES ARE DEDUCTIBLE** and which are not. Books from Diane Kennedy (www.taxloopholes.com) and Barbara Weltman (www.bwideas.com) are good places to start.

CLIFF ENNICO, *best known as co-host of PBS TV series* Money Hunt, *is author of* Small Business Survival Guide *and an eBay University instructor (www.ebay.com/university). He teaches the legal and tax aspects of starting a business on eBay.*

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THE PRICE IS RIGHT

BY DAVID WORRELL

HOW DO YOU GET TOP DOLLAR FOR YOUR EBAY ITEMS? TRY TACTICS THE PROS USE—AND GUIDE THE BIDDING FRENZY IN YOUR FAVOR.

An eBay item listing is a beautiful thing. It magically combines the best of free markets with a sense of competition and excitement that almost guarantees you'll get a fair price—perhaps even a generous price—for the product you're selling.

But the magic starts long before the first bid is placed. In fact, in most eBay sales, it is the seller who is the magician—deftly mixing various pricing strategies and tools to ensure that the most buyers bid the highest price they can.

How you conjure the best prices, of course, depends on what you're selling. So here are a few tricks for items of all prices—from $10,000 tractors to 10-cent postcards.

Getting Top Dollar for Luxury Goods

Many people mistakenly believe that eBay is only for small, mass-market items. In fact, there are successful sellers in the luxury goods market as well. Take Ricky Serbin (eBay User ID: ricysue) of San Francisco, for example. Serbin left a successful career in the fashion industry to sell designer garments and accessories on eBay.

You might not think that one seller could move very many designer garments and handbags priced at over $1,000 each, but you'd be wrong. Serbin is a Platinum PowerSeller, selling more than $25,000 worth of designer apparel and accessories on eBay every month. "I was lead designer of a large jewelry firm in the fashion industry, but I quit my job just two weeks after starting on eBay," he says.

Serbin is part of a hot eBay market for upscale apparel. According to eBay's own statistics, brand names like Coach, Gucci and Louis Vuitton are the top search terms in the apparel category. In fact, a rare luxury handbag recently sold on eBay for $59,000.

With such wild variations in price, the risks are high—but potential rewards are higher. "I'm willing to pay $1,000 for something to triple my money," says Serbin. "It is a gamble, but I take the risk." And indeed, most of Serbin's pricing strategy centers on making money by reducing the chances of losing money.

To minimize the risk of not selling the item at all, Serbin underprices some pieces. "If I get it for a great price, I try to pass it on at a great price," he says. Most of his items sell for 60 percent to 80 percent less than the comparable retail price—but they sell fast. "Probably 40 percent of my items sell within 12 hours at a

TO RESERVE OR NOT TO RESERVE

Like many sophisticated eBay sellers, Ann Wood (eBay User ID: willow-wear) strives to get the highest price while paying the lowest fees to eBay. As a Gold PowerSeller, Wood has experimented with reserve pricing, but finds it counterproductive. Adding a Reserve Price prevents an item from selling at anything less than the minimum price you set, but costs about 1 percent of the Reserve Price.

"Unless you have a reserve, an item can sell for less than you're willing to sell it for," she explains. "But I don't like to use a reserve—it really racks up my fees. Reserves also dissuade people from bidding."

eBay also notes that on average, items with no reserve typically sell for more than those with reserves.

Although Wood admits that reserve pricing is the norm in some markets, such as antiques, she prefers instead to simply set a reasonable opening bid. "My general guideline, when I'm not certain what it'll go up to, is to start the item at a price I'll be happy to get even with just one bid," she says. That simple strategy guarantees she'll get a fair price with the minimum fee.

Buy It Now price," he says. And that keeps him in business with a locked-in profit.

Buy It Now—an option for buyers to purchase an item at a price set by the seller without bidding—is perfect for high-priced items, says Ben Hanna, eBay's senior manager for business and industrial categories. Hanna coaches sellers of high-priced items to use both the Buy It Now feature and a new option called "Best Offer." The new feature is getting a lot of use at the high end of the market. "We've had a lot of demand for this," says Hanna. "It lets bidders make an offer. If I have a tractor and want $10,000 for it, I could check 'Accept Best Offers' during the listing process. The listing shows a 'Submit Best Offer' link and it allows me to negotiate directly with each potential buyer."

Although managing best offers is not part of Serbin's current strategy, he always uses a Buy It Now price to capture those buyers who are purchasing on an impulse or who want an item right away.

Serbin's other pricing secret is to be accommodating to buyers from around the world. "Thirty percent of my business is international—South Korea, Japan, Australia, Morocco and the Far East," he says. Those customers tend to be willing to pay higher prices for goods that are relatively scarce in their home markets. They are also loyal, says Serbin: About 50 percent of his overseas customers come back for repeat purchases.

HOW TO FIND PRICES FROM COMPLETED LISTINGS

"Pricing starts with research," says Ann Wood (eBay User ID: willow-wear). When she's listing an item, she lets the market tell her what it's worth. "I look at active item listings first, then at recently completed sales," she says.

TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH SIMILAR ITEMS HAVE SOLD FOR IN THE PAST, TRY THIS SIMPLE SEARCH PROCEDURE:

- Sign in—this information is available only to registered users.
- Click on the "Advanced Search" link at the top right of most eBay pages.
- Enter keywords for the item in the box on the search form.
- Check the "Completed Listings Only" box in the "Advanced Search" form.
- Add any other criteria, and click the "Search" button.

Managing the Middle Market

Well below the price of a couture dress or a custom-made designer handbag is the vast market for midpriced items, such as the consumer electronics sold by Jennifer Canty's company, Dyscern (eBay User ID: dyscern).

Canty, 33, started her Great Falls, Virginia-based business on eBay to spend more time at home with her family. She admits now that the idea may have backfired: Her business has evolved to Titanium PowerSeller status, with over $150,000 a month in sales and 14 employees. Every bit of Dyscern's revenue is made from selling consumer electronics like iPods and Palm Pilots. The company sells 300 to 400 units each week at prices ranging from $30 to about $300.

There's a consistently strong demand for iPods, says Canty. And that makes finding a buyer a pretty sure bet. But from the buyer's perspective, one iPod looks pretty much like the next, so an auction-style listing with a low starting price can create buyer excitement.

"We do everything at auction," admits Canty. "We found that we could get higher prices if we just let the market decide the price." She's not kidding. Every one of Dyscern's listings starts at just one penny, and on average, Dyscern's own testing shows that they earn about 10 to 20 percent more from that format than any other.

"I've never had to sell an iPod for a penny," she laughs. "After a three-day listing, pretty much everything ends up as it should."

This very simple approach to selling has several benefits for Dyscern, one being that the company never has to relist a product that doesn't close. "For a long time, there were just three of us," says Canty, "so we had to keep it simple. The beauty of eBay is it's a natural marketplace."

Canty's other strategies include offering international shipping and listing a few items to close every hour of the day. That way, she explains, unsuccessful bidders on one item can skip directly to the next, building a strong momentum for all her listings. Dyscern's listings are all three days long, which Canty feels helps her meet the expectations of bidders who want immediate results.

Collectibles and Low-Priced Items

Probably the most difficult items to price correctly are one-of-a-kind collectibles or very low-priced items. And when you have a low-priced collectible, you've got a real predicament.

That's the challenge faced by Gail Hubbuch, 59, who sells historic postcards. Hubbuch (eBay User ID: snowhub) started several years ago from her Columbia, Kentucky, home with an inventory of more than 100,000 postcards, for which she paid an average of just 26 cents each.

"I've sold postcards to the Guggenheim, the Smithsonian, and several historical societies," she says. But pricing is still more art than science for Hubbuch. "My

Entrepreneurs Reap Rewards of New Opportunity

WHY ARE THERE 100 BUYERS TO EVERY SELLER ON EBAY?

Simple answer — selling on eBay requires time, expertise and good product sources. Although many eBay entrepreneurs search for merchandise to sell, most overlook the $20 billion of valuable merchandise that sits idly in closets, garages, attics and stockrooms.

Savvy entrepreneurs have found a way to take advantage of this huge opportunity by joining FoundValue, a national network of Specialists who sell merchandise on eBay for those who don't have the time, inclination or know-how to do it themselves.

SELLING FOR OTHERS: FoundValue Specialists turn stuff into cash.

What makes the FoundValue opportunity unique is that there is no inventory to be bought, no employees to be hired, and no retail store to manage.

FoundValue provides a one-stop solution that includes easy-to-use online tools, training, marketing and business support. This makes it simple for Specialists to provide their service: pick up merchandise from customers, take photos, create eBay listings, collect and disburse payments, and ship merchandise to buyers.

The company also offers Specialists shipping discounts, national PR, and extra income opportunities including a mentorship program that allows them to earn cash for training new Specialists.

FoundValue has attracted a diverse set of entrepreneurs — from stay-at-home moms, to experienced eBay sellers, to former corporate executives. "There's a huge, untapped supply of merchandise that can be sold and we provide the solution to transform it to cash," says Stella Kleiman, FoundValue founder and CEO. "For an investment of less than $100, you just can't beat it."

To learn more about FoundValue or to find a Specialist in your area, visit www.foundvalue.com or call 1-877-538-8773.

SUCCESS PROFILES

"Being your own boss is fabulous – I like being able to work either early mornings or late evenings – leaving days to be with my kids. FoundValue makes running a business simple and provides the tools and training that I need."

— Sarah Powers, Seattle, WA

Sarah looked for an opportunity to make money that also offered the flexibility to stay home with her kids. Intrigued by the idea of starting an eBay business but with no prior experience, Sarah chose to join FoundValue. Sarah's business expanded after she was featured in a local newspaper. Today, Sarah has more business than she can handle and is looking for Specialists to share her workload.

"I wanted a way to work smarter, not harder. FoundValue works, as it provides a way for me to earn extra revenue through mentoring and growing a team. The company also provides tools to simplify that process.

— Bob Willey, Baltimore, MD

Bob searched for a way to expand his eBay business. As an experienced seller, Bob was attracted to FoundValue's mentorship program which allowed him to earn additional income by building a network of Specialists as well as training them to become mentors themselves. After only a couple of months, a few Specialists on Bob's team have surpassed his own sales on eBay.

"The FoundValue model is attractive because there's no big upfront investment. Also, for the consumer, the pick-up model is a lot better than the drop-off — everyone is busy these days, so it makes a lot more sense."

— Joan Goldstein, New York, NY

Joan, a former Wall Street executive, wanted more time to focus on her customers rather than dealing with the logistics of her eBay business. Joan researched different opportunities and chose FoundValue for its model and income potential. Since joining FoundValue, Joan has sold over $60,000 worth of merchandise and is mentoring a team of 14 Specialists.

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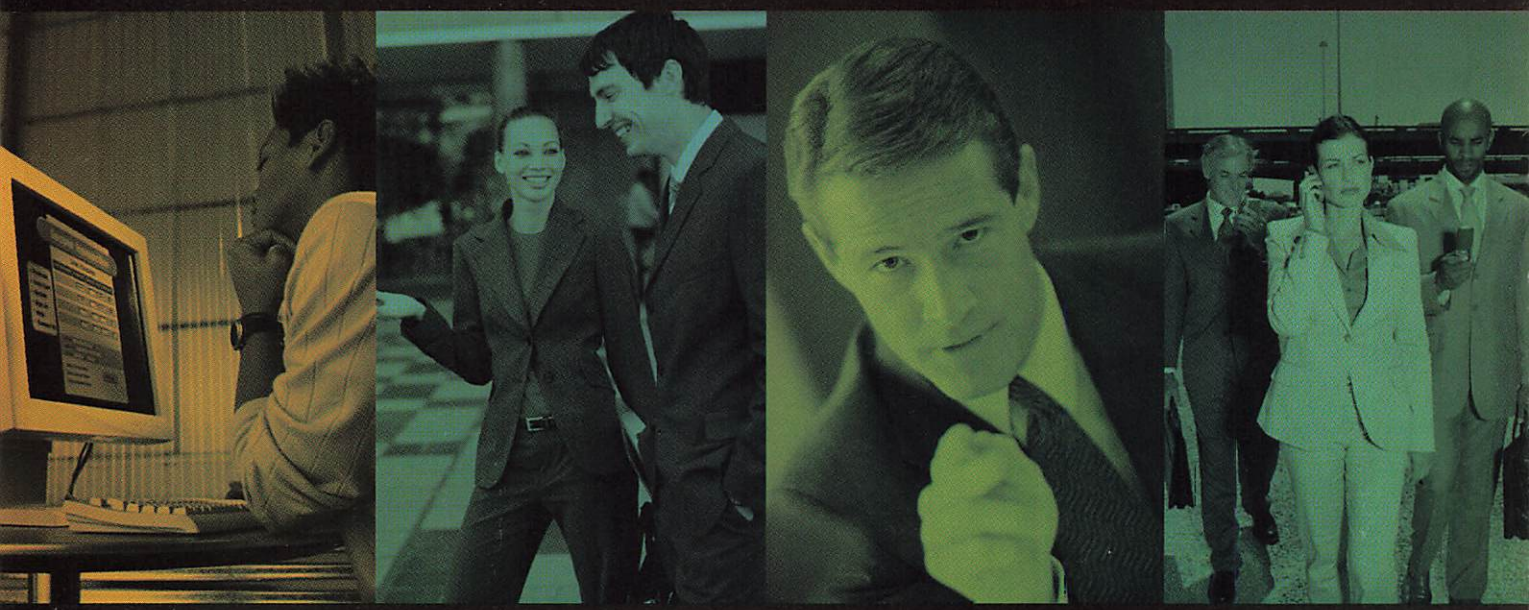
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR?



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Spot-on: Jennifer Canty starts bids at just a penny to generate interest.

main selling strategy is to make money on obscure places that no longer exist. I never know what the price will be—it has to do with people's emotional attachments to those places," says Hubbuch.

It's that emotion that drove one of her postcards—a picture of a small-town gymnasium—to a final selling price of $263. "I've sold many cards for over $100," says Hubbuch. But she concedes that most go for about $7, and many in her collection will probably never sell.

With more than 700 coins, 300 stamps, 15 Pez dispensers and 9,675 other collectible items sold every hour, according to eBay statistics, eBay is the perfect market for collectibles. Nonetheless, it takes a keen marketer to optimize profits on low-priced items.

John McDonald, eBay's director of Home & Garden, recognizes the unique challenge that sellers like Hubbuch face. "You're trying to make this a great value to a buyer," says McDonald. "If it's a low-priced item, how can you make the whole price they're paying a great value? At a low average selling price, you want quantity."

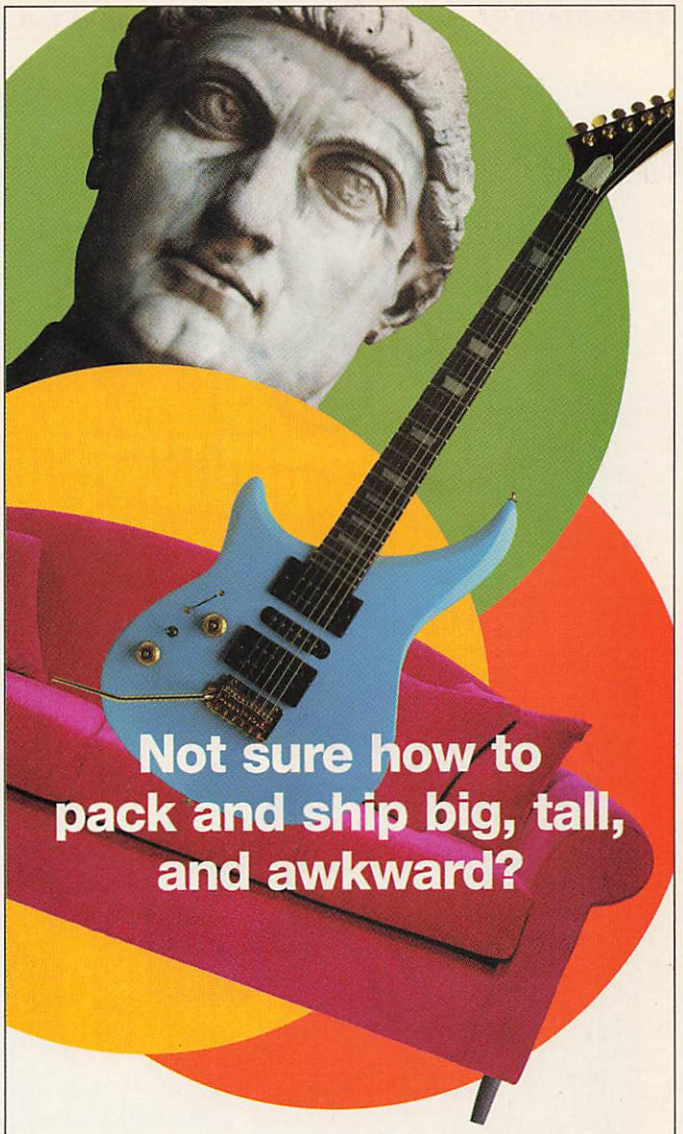
McDonald says the answer to both value and volume lies in offering attractive shipping rates. "When you get down to low-priced items, you're balancing shipping costs vs. selling price," he points out. "For example, people are selling cabinet pulls for 99 cents, but the shipping is typically $4 to $6. You want to make it obvious that you want buyers to bundle and buy a lot of units."

Pricing for Value

Whether you're selling postcards or Prada, the right pricing strategy will attract new buyers and maximize profits. The key in all situations is value—that magical mix of right price, right time and right place. With a little practice and experimentation, you can start making the eBay magic work for you. ■

DAVID WORRELL *is* Entrepreneur *magazine's "Raising Money" columnist.*

PHOTO COURTESY: DYSCERN



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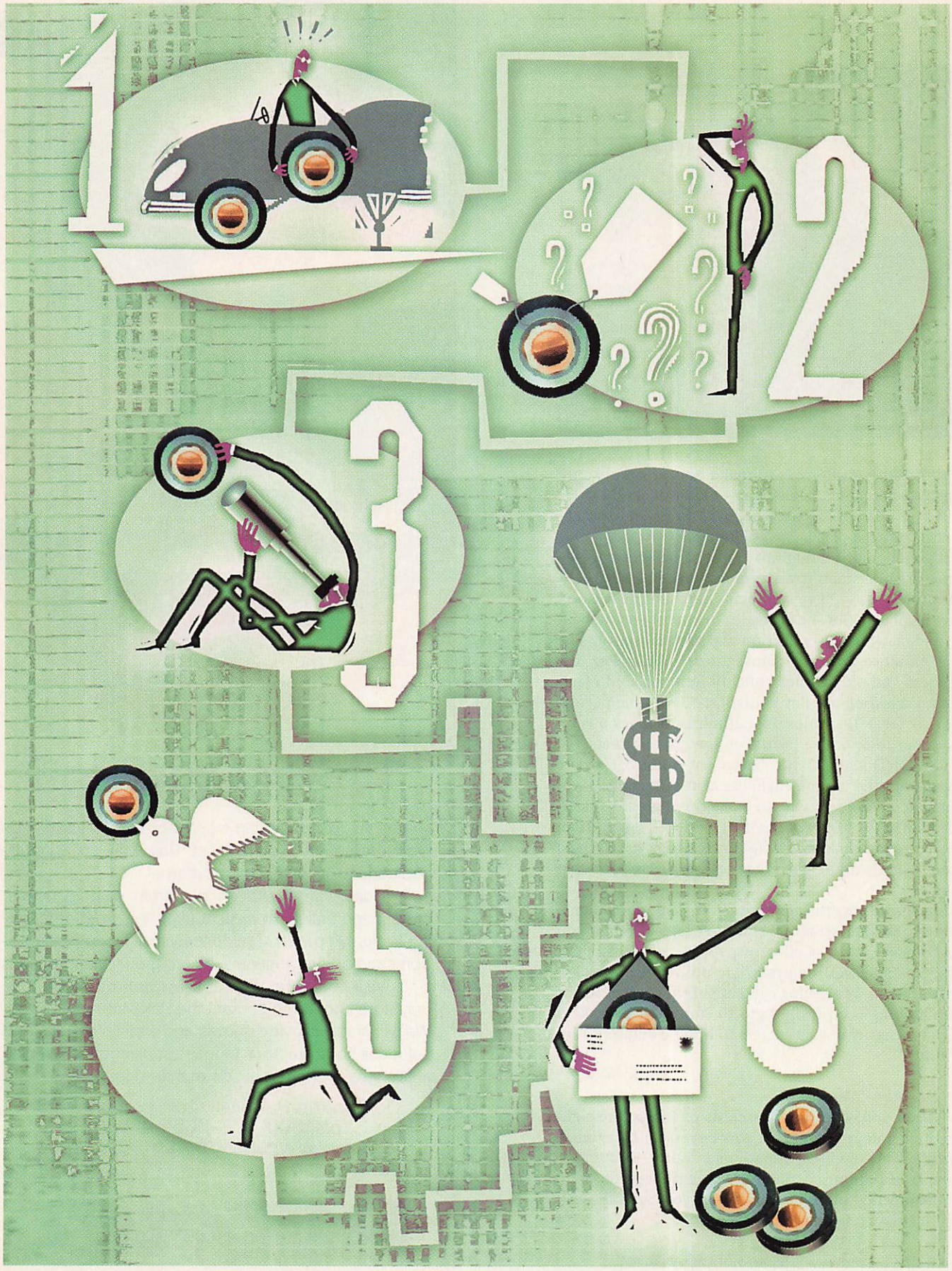

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ONE *Step* *at a* TIME

NEW TO THE WORLD OF EBAY? NEVER FEAR. GUIDE YOUR BUSINESS TOWARD SUCCESS WITH THESE SIMPLE STARTUP TIPS.

BY SHEREE R. CURRY

Ted Corriher, a home, garden and farm equipment dealer in Newton, North Carolina, didn't know much about computers or the internet four years ago. He didn't even have a personal e-mail account. "I am computer illiterate," he says. "But all my friends were buying on eBay, and I didn't want to miss [out]." So he asked one of his employees to find out how he could sell his equipment on eBay. That was three years ago. Today, he sells about $100,000 worth of equipment on eBay every month, and his predominantly tractor-sales business has grown from $4 million to $10 million in annual sales.

It's almost hard to believe this $3.27 billion online marketplace with a record 404 million listings as of the end of 2004 was Corriher's initial foray onto the internet. The opportunity to expand beyond a 300-mile radius from the doorstep of Corriher Implement Co., which his grandfather started in the 1850s, is part of what persuaded this 40-year-old to join a whopping 147 million registered users on eBay. Operating under the User ID tractor123, Corriher says eBay has been a rewarding and enlightening business expansion, much like the era when his grandfather abandoned the sale of mules in favor of farm equipment.

"As soon as I got involved [in eBay], it opened up a whole new world for me," says Corriher. His new and used New Holland tractors sell for upwards of $10,000 apiece to buyers all across the United States.

Corriher is a PowerSeller, an official designation bestowed by eBay upon those sellers who have reached a certain sales performance and have a high level of total feedback, with at least a 98 percent positive rating by other eBay users. It's not impossible for the startup seller to reach this level of achievement in as short a time as Corriher, if not shorter. Here are success tactics from eBay experts and PowerSellers that just might help you succeed alongside one of the 724,000 people in the U.S. currently making either a full-time or part-time living selling wares on eBay.

Getting Started

While Corriher's tractor business took off on eBay, most sellers don't start out with such high-ticket items. Whatever you decide to sell, setting up shop on eBay is fairly easy to do. There are virtually no startup costs, you can work from home with almost no overhead, and your marketing can all be done online, right within eBay. An internet connection is all you need, aside from the most important requirement: inventory. At any given time, there are approximately 50 million items available on eBay worldwide, with 5 million new items added each day. To compete, you must have an item to sell, even if it's ad space on your forehead, which Omaha resident Andrew Fischer, 20, sold to highest bidder SnoreStop for $37,375 in January.

Your best chance at success is to start out selling something you are fairly knowledgeable about, say experts, because you're more likely to be on target about the value of what you're selling. If you do not have expertise with your items, don't fret. You can get up to speed fairly quickly by doing research on eBay, says Joseph T. Sinclair, author of *eBay Business the Smart Way*. Scan eBay's completed listings archives to track how much similar items have recently sold for, he says. Once you know your inventory, you can price it well and move it quickly.

Marsha Pater, 47, started her $120,000 business on eBay seven years ago with a camera and overstock inventory her husband, Bill, 56, had earmarked for the scrap yard from his tool and die business. Many of the items had been sitting in a warehouse for years because Bill cringed at the idea of melting down good-condition, unused items simply because his Midwestern tri-state clients had moved on to other projects that required different tooling.

Originally, the Plainfield, Illinois, couple began on eBay by buying pottery for friends who didn't have a computer. "My husband said if we could do all this buying, we could do the selling," says Marsha. "We didn't have a lot of out-of-pocket expenses, and we started on something we were familiar with."

And expenses were low. Back then, Pater didn't even own a digital camera. She took photos with her 35mm, developed them at Walgreen's, scanned them into the computer and uploaded them into a file. "It was extremely time-consuming," she says. "The pictures would come back and not be any good, and we'd have to start all over again. Our first big purchase was a $500 digital camera." Pater and experts strongly advise sellers to invest in a digital camera. From there, listing with the easy "Sell Your Item" form on eBay can help you manage the images and text.

A Picture's Worth . . .

Without a photo, or a particularly good one, you may lose the sale before there's even click-through. Pater learned that the hard way. The first photo in your item listing is free, but you must pay for the one that appears on the search results page. This 35-cent option eBay offers is called Gallery and allows you to have a thumbnail photo appear next to your listing title in the search results; larger photos (up to 12) appear for an additional charge when a po-

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FROM ENTREPRENEUR MAGAZINE'S BUSINESS STARTUP SERIES

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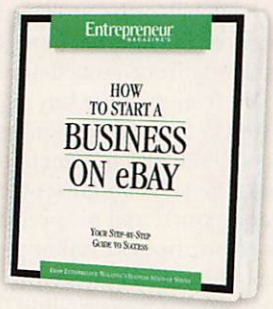
eBay is changing the way merchandise is bought and sold all over the world. And this guide shows you how to be part of this booming business. This guide won't show you how to start an online auction business, but how to use eBay auctions to start and grow your own business. We'll begin with an overview of online auctions, look at the products and services you can sell, and then help you, step-by-step, set up and run your new venture.



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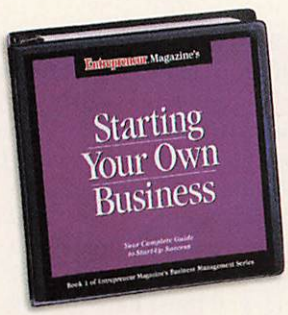

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tential buyer clicks on the listing. Pater, looking to save money, opted not to splurge for Gallery photos of her items. After all, when potential buyers clicked on the listing titles, they would see her listed photos. But through a web hit counter on her site, Pater soon discovered that Pater Industrial Tool Supply was not getting many hits on its listings because it lacked the initial photo on the search results page. However, once she uploaded a photo next to the titles, demand improved, and today Pater sells an average of 250 items a week from the 3,300-square-foot home she bought with profits from her business on eBay.

Quality and up-close photographs are important to making a sale, says Jim "Griff" Griffith, dean of eBay Education. "People expect to see something visually. You can't even sell software without showing a picture of the box or the CD," he says. "People need to know they are buying something tangible."

Pricing Pointers

Once they get a look at your product, potential buyers want to know about price. It only takes two bidders to drive up the price of an item you list, but if you price that item too high, the buyers may never come. So what starting price do you set?

Experts agree $1 works most of the time. "People like looking for a good deal, and they can't get much better than $1 for an item worth $500 [even if they do end up paying $500]," says Corriher. Plus, the lower you set the price, the more people are likely to bid and become emotionally attached to the item, wanting to bid more frequently because they promised their wife that pair of diamond earrings. (For more on pricing, see "The Price Is Right" on page 30.)

How long you should list an item depends on a variety of factors. You may list an item for one, three, five, seven or 10 days, though sellers must meet certain qualifications to use one-day listings, and 10-day listings are subject to fees. Consider your buyers: Listing an item longer allows more time for buyers to watch your

Do-it-yourself: Creating mailing labels through PayPal saves Kim Everitt time and money.

Photo Courtesy: Kim Everitt

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Lisa Suttora, Founder and CEO of What Do I Sell.com is co-author of the forthcoming book
WHAT TO SELL ON EBAY AND WHERE TO GET IT:
The Definitive Guide to Product Sourcing for eBay and Beyond
Available January 2006 from McGraw-Hill Publishers

item and place bids. Your selling volume is also a factor. For example, if you're a high-volume seller and are listing several identical items, choosing the one-day option allows you to offer more listings for those items. Also, if the item you're selling relates to an event, such as a concert or a holiday, be sure the listing ends with enough time to ship the item to the buyer.

Check Out the Hit List

What if you have plenty of great photos and a good starting price, but you feel like you're still not receiving the hits you should? Find out just how many visitors you're getting, and you can start to solve the problem. To do so, add a hit counter to your page when you are setting up a listing. Knowing how many visitors you receive compared to the number of bids you receive will tell you how successful your listing is. Getting 10,000 onlookers a day but no bids? Perhaps your title copy is great, but your description or pricing is off. Or maybe you placed your item in the wrong category. Look at your listing in more detail to determine where the problem is.

Big time: Selling on eBay took Ted Corriher's family farm-equipment business nationwide.

Scott Hunter, co-owner of consulting firm HowToSellAuctions.com in San Jose, California, discovered just how critical the listing details can be. A client through his previous employer wanted to sell a 6-inch change plate from the Titanic that he'd inherited from his aunt. Hunter listed the item on behalf of his client and expected it to generate thousands of hits. And it did. In the first three days, he noticed tens of thousands of visitors had taken a peek into the item listing, but no bids had been placed. Hunter determined something must be off with the description, so he revamped the listing copy. Instead of simply describing the plate as coming from the Titanic, he told the story behind it: A woman on the ship took the plate upon check-in, long before the ship hit the iceberg. Because women and children were loaded onto the safety boats first, she survived, bringing the plate, hidden in her coat, with her. The Czech Republic manufacturers of the plate verified its authenticity. A bidding frenzy ensued. By the time the auction ended, the plate had sold for $10,000 to the owners of the internet casino GoldenPalace.com.

When you begin to draw traffic, managing potential buyer inquiries can be time-consuming. To cut down on questions, be as detailed as you can in your listing. It will save you time, especially when the bidding frenzy begins and bidders start to e-mail you questions they may need answered in a two-minute time frame as the end of the listing draws near.

The Payoff

After the high of the listing winds down, it's time to handle payment and shipping. Every seasoned seller will tell you to accept PayPal. The secure online payment system handled $6.2 billion in the first quarter of 2005 and has over 70 million accounts from users in 56 markets. Additionally, 3 out of 4 buyers on eBay prefer paying with PayPal, according to eBay. A primary reason for this is that PayPal keeps buyers' information secure by sending sellers the money without sharing the buyer's financial information. Indeed, a recent survey found that 92 percent of PayPal customers viewed the service as a secure way to pay online, helping overcome mounting concerns among consumers about the safety of their personal information online.

PayPal allows sellers to accept major credit cards and bank account payments with no merchant account or gateway required. Fees are considerably lower than those sellers would otherwise pay through a traditional credit-card arrangement.

In addition, PayPal offers protection programs for both buyers and sellers. Buyers are shielded from merchandise that may be misrepresented or not delivered, while sellers are protected for up to $5,000 from fraudulent transactions and against credit-card chargebacks.

When considering shipping, you'll need to figure out 1) how much to charge customers, and 2) how you will execute the shipment. When deciding on shipping charges, you can offer three different flat-rate amounts or let the buyer use eBay's Shipping Calculator to determine the cost for themselves. The Calculator is a free eBay tool the bidder can use during the listing process to estimate in advance how much they will be charged for shipping. The Calculator works by ZIP code and can also determine international rates.

For shipping average-size packages, eBay supports the U.S. Postal Service and UPS. For items weighing more than 150 pounds, Freightquote.com can provide solutions.

Photo Courtesy: Ted Corriher

A rookie seller mistake when shipping smaller items is standing in endless lines at the post office. Invest in a scale, suggests 34-year-old Kim Everitt, CEO of Walk In Auction, an eBay drop-off store in Golden, Colorado. Since buying a scale on eBay for $30, she now weighs her items at her store and prints out most of the labels via PayPal. The pre-printed labels save her time and save her customers money, as metered mail can have a slightly lower rate than stamped first-class. Most important, says Everitt, who averages $25,000 a month in sales, is to be able to send packages on a daily basis, improving your customer service.

Keep 'Em Happy

Happy customers are a large part of securing success on eBay, as is evidenced by the 2.7 billion feedback comments eBay members had left by the end of 2004 regarding their eBay transactions. To maintain a good rating, you must have the attitude that the customer is always right. If there's a mistake, fix it. Corriher explains that if a buyer tells him he missed a problem on a tractor before shipping, he handles it immediately. "I have shipped it back at my expense or sent them the part. I [do] whatever it [takes] to make the customer happy," says Corriher. "I have spent hundreds of dollars fixing things that were maybe not my fault. But hundreds of dollars is a small percentage of the millions I've sold on eBay."

Current eBay PowerSellers have a wealth of information and tips, and they're willing to share their know-how with others. Check out eBay's Community discussion boards to seek answers to some of your concerns. But know everyone is in it together. "We are still learning," says Corriher. "And by learning, you grow." ■

SHEREE R. CURRY *specializes in management best practices and is an award-winning business journalist and former staff reporter at* Fortune. *She currently freelances from her suburban Minneapolis home.*

Inside Scoop

WE'VE GOT 19 SECRETS YOU CAN USE TO CREATE A BOOMING BUSINESS ON EBAY.

(1) CHOOSE A USER ID CAREFULLY.
Be sure to choose a User ID that represents your business or the items you sell. This will become your eBay brand identity to prospective buyers.

(2) START WITH THE "HOW TO SELL" TOUR.
Watch the selling demonstration at http://pages.ebay.com/education/howtosell/index.html. Learn more at the eBay Learning Center (http://pages.ebay.com/education).

(3) GET ID VERIFIED.
You can use the ID Verify option instead of, or in addition to, giving your credit card information when setting up a Seller's Account. You might want to do it so you'll be given an ID Verify icon in your feedback profile, giving the eBay community more confidence to buy from you and allowing you to bypass some feedback requirements when selling in certain formats.

(4) GET COMPUTER BACKUP DISKS.
Power surges or computer crashes can wipe out your valuable data in seconds. Routinely save the business documents on your hard drive to disks. Label them, and file them in a safe place.

(5) USE ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE.
Accounting software helps you know how your business is doing so you can make it more profitable. It's also going to make your life much easier come tax time. A bookkeeper can recommend the right software for your business, set it up and teach you how to use it.

(6) MAKE SPACE FOR INVENTORY AND SHIPPING MATERIALS.
These items don't have to be in your office, but they do need to be in a safe, dry place nearby. This helps you keep an eye on what you've got and what you need as your business grows. The U.S. Postal Service offers free eBay/USPS co-branded Priority Mail shipping boxes. Go to http://ebaysupplies.usps.com to order yours.

(7) WRITE A DAILY TO-DO LIST.
Schedule a time to follow up on opportunities that aren't part of your normal tasks, and use this time frame to respond to unplanned tasks that pop up that day.

(8) TAKE EBAY'S FEES INTO ACCOUNT.
Even though eBay charges a small listing Insertion Fee and a Final Value Fee, you may want to take these into account when you're pricing your items. Both of these fees are listed here: http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/fees.html.

(9) CHOOSE THE BEST CATEGORY.
From eBay's home page, click the "Buy" button, and browse the categories to find ones that work for your items. Also see where competing items have been placed. It's a good idea to choose two categories for your listings to reach more buyers.

(10) SPOTLIGHT YOUR TITLE.
For an additional fee, you can grab buyers' attention when they search for listings by bolding your text (which has increased final item prices by an average of 25 percent) and using a color highlight or border on your listing. Also, say more about your item by adding a subtitle.

(11) CONSIDER HIRING A TRADING ASSISTANT.
When your business on eBay starts booming, you might want help managing your listings so you can focus on other areas of growing your business and also enjoy a balanced work/home life. Hiring a Trading Assistant can free up the time you need and want. Find a Trading Assistant at http://pages.ebay.com/tahub/index.html.

(12) USE MY EBAY.
Make sure to use My eBay to monitor your listings and activity on the site. My Messages can also help you keep track of your eBay correspondence.

(13) ATTEND INDUSTRY TRADE SHOWS.
Not only will you get a preview of product trends, you can also connect with manufacturers and discuss the opportunity of selling their products on eBay. Bring your business cards, and be ready to discuss your success as an eBay seller.

INSIDE SCOOP *continued on page 85*

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BONUS SECTION

SPECIAL

HOLIDAY GUIDE

Expert Advice to Boost Your HOLIDAY SALES ON EBAY

'TIS THE

BY MARK HENRICKS

LEARN HOW THE HOLIDAYS CAN HELP BOOST YOUR EBAY SALES WITH OUR MUST-HAVE TIPS, TACTICS AND ADVICE.

Everyone else may be getting out their sweaters, but on eBay, holiday time is the hottest season. For many brick-and-mortar retailers, November and December are the make-it-or-break-it months, when the offline world racks up as much as 50 percent of annual sales and an even larger percentage of profits. So it's not surprising that eBay sellers report that the holidays are important to them as well. "We probably do a little more than a third of our business in that period of time," says Jenanne Hassler (eBay User ID: jenanne), who, along with her husband, sells an average of $3,000 worth of video games and video-game books each month on eBay from Waynesville, North Carolina.

Many larger eBay sellers have similar experiences. Jeff Hess, 54, owner of Hess Fine Art in St. Petersburg, Florida, does close to $5 million annually on eBay, selling vintage watches, jewelry, art and antiques. About 25 percent are holiday sales, says Hess (eBay User ID: hessfine), who adds that since he began emphasizing eBay over his brick-and-mortar store several years ago, the holidays

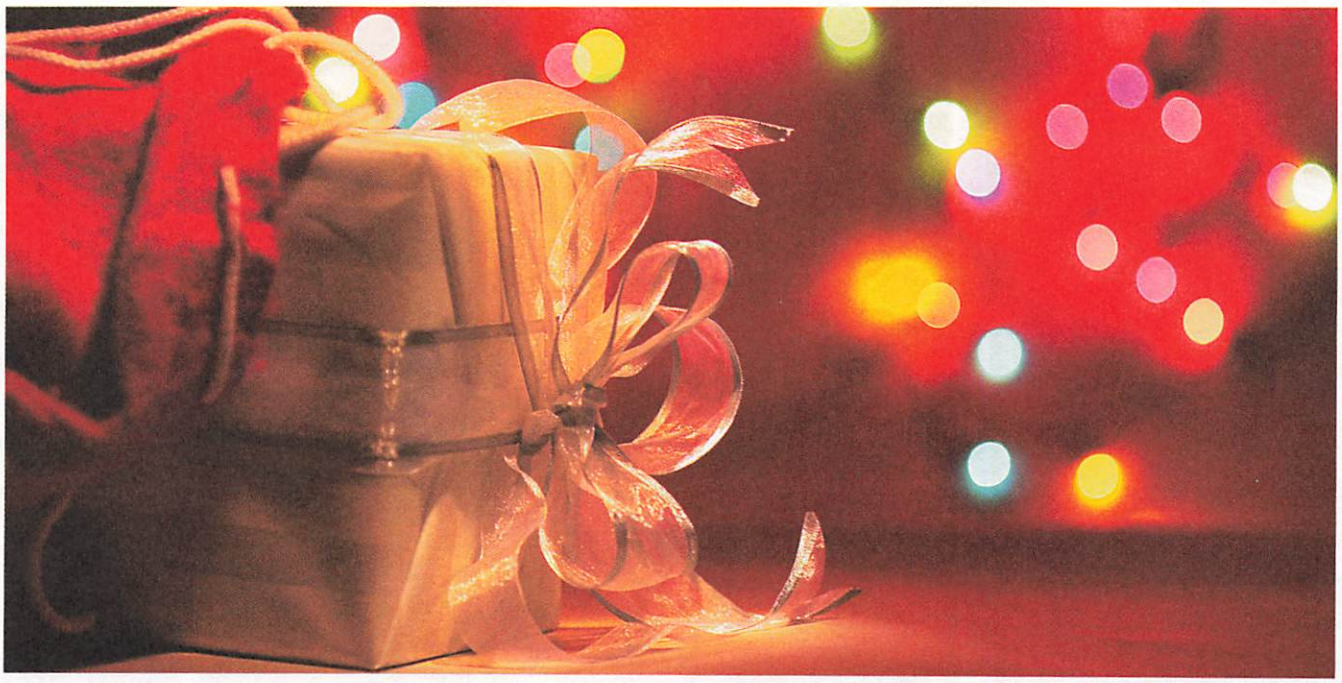

PHOTO © PHOTOS.COM

SEASON

have become even more important. "In the past, like most vintage retailers, we didn't have a very active Christmas season," Hess says. "Our season was essentially over by November 15. With the advent of eBay, we found we were more like the standard Christmas holiday retailers, [which see an increase during the holiday season]."

There are a couple of reasons why the holidays are critical for eBay sellers. One is that eBay increases its advertising budget during the holidays, executing a wide array of marketing, advertising and promotional tactics to encourage buying holiday gifts on eBay. Every retailer should take advantage of the significant effort eBay makes to drive traffic to its site during this crucial time of year.

Another reason is that eBay is so mainstream, it can't help but be affected by society as a whole, says Debra Schepp, a writer in Middletown, Maryland, who co-authored *eBay PowerSeller Secrets: Insider Tips From eBay's Most Successful Sellers*. "It's becoming more and more true as people are more comfortable with shopping on eBay—and devoted to shopping on eBay," Schepp says. "Plus, there are lots of things that make it convenient [for buyers] to shop on eBay, like the fact that you can offer [them] gift-wrapping and direct shipping to recipients. That makes eBay competitive with any online shopping [destination]." The proof, Schepp says, is the fact that the biggest shopping day of the year—the day after Thanksgiving—is the same for both offline retailers and eBay sellers.

Best Sellers

Since making the most of the holiday season is a priority for most businesses on eBay, where do you start? First and foremost, sell what people want to buy. So what are the hottest holiday items on eBay? "It all depends on what you're selling," says Marsha Collier, author of *eBay Business All-in-One Desk Reference for Dummies*. "That's the magic [of] eBay. People can come and buy just about anything, and people want just about anything."

PHOTOS© PHOTOS.COM

The holiday hotties on eBay tend to mirror what's hot elsewhere (and often what you can't find elsewhere). As a marketplace of many small sellers rather than one dominated by a few mega-retailers, it's truly a democratic free-for-all, with the decision about what sells ultimately resting in the hands of the buyers. "Since what's for sale on eBay isn't dependent on a big corporation or a bunch of executives deciding what to sell this season, it's a reflection of what's happening [all over] America," Schepp says. "Anything that's popular somewhere else is going to be turning up on eBay."

WHAT *NOT* TO SELL

Experienced eBay sellers say there's not always an obvious reason why some items move better during nonholiday periods, but it does happen. Jeff Hess, owner of Hess Fine Art in St. Petersburg, Florida, says, "It's difficult to sell large diamonds on eBay [during the holiday season]. Not expensive diamond jewelry—[that's] easy to sell. But large solitaires, one carat and up, are difficult."

Likewise, holiday shoppers at Dangerous Threads, based in Nashville, Tennessee, snub the leather-craft supplies that are mainstays the rest of the year. Owner Bob Kitchener thinks he knows why. "It stands to reason," he says. "You don't want to hand somebody a gift of a pile of rivets." Generally, experts say, holiday-unfriendly items can be anything not usually regarded as a gift.

With that in mind, eBay sellers who want to make the most of the holidays should make it a point to know what's selling well in society at large during the period. When an in-demand item is hard to find offline, buyers turn to eBay. For instance, notes Schepp, when the iPod was scarce in traditional brick-and-mortar channels last year, units were still available on eBay—and selling like hot cakes.

A few recurring themes outline what makes a product hot during the holidays. For instance, Hassler, 37, says higher-end rare books sell better during the holidays than at other times of the year. In other words, if you're selling products like watches during the holidays, think Rolex. Bundled products—items sold together at a special price—are also better sellers during that period, Hassler says: "It's a focus on items that may not sell during the [rest of the] year because you're not going to buy them for yourself, but you're going to put them on your wish list."

One-of-a-kind custom orders also move better during the holidays for Bob Kitchener, owner of Dangerous Threads, a Nashville, Tennessee, eBay retailer of leather goods and craft items (eBay User ID: bobkitchener). "Custom stuff is really good at Christmastime, along with customized things like [guitar] straps and belts with names on them," says Kitchener, 53.

The price tag is likewise a key indicator of what will sell for Hess. "It seems like everything expensive sells better during the holidays," he explains.

To know everything about what sells, you'd have to survey all eBay sellers, or at least a large sample of them. Luckily, you can use a variety of tools that track, analyze and report on the bestselling items instead. The "Hot Categories Report" is an eBay tool for sellers that lists Hot, Very Hot and Super Hot categories each month based on factors including month-over-month bid growth, bids-per-item and conversion rate. To view the report, go to Seller Central (www.ebay.com/sellercentral), click on "What's Hot," then click "Hot Items by Category." eBay Pulse (http://pulse.ebay.com) gives you a sense in real time of what people are looking for. You can also find out what items are hot in a particular category by going to Seller Central, clicking on "Category Tips," and clicking on "In Demand" under any category.

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There are also third-party sources for information on what's hot for the holidays. Terapeak Marketing Research (www.terapeak.com) licenses eBay transaction data and goes back as far as a year to provide its own "Hot List" reports. Andale (www.andale.com) is a third-party subscription service that includes detailed research tools, including information on hot-selling products.

Finally, don't neglect to place at least some trust in your own well-honed instincts, advises Jim Migdal, senior category manager for eBay Toys & Hobbies. He's been impressed and occasionally amazed at how eBay retailers seem to intuitively stay ahead of hot-item trends. "Our sellers just have a nose for that stuff," he says. "And they find it and get it on the site."

It's All in the Timing

There is more to making the most of the holidays than having the products everybody wants. Shipping policies and procedures, timing, site design, payment options, sourcing and more all play roles in getting the most from the year-end opportunity. Of them all, timing may be the most vital. Experts and experienced sellers all sing the same tune: Start early.

"You have to start very, very early," stresses Hess. "Online, people tend to shop early, so we start about October 15." Why so soon? Hess explains that his listings generally run 10 days. "If we start October 15, those seemingly early auctions will end October 25, the following ones will end November 3 and so on," he says. "We'll have only six to eight cycles to take full advantage of the Christmas holiday [season]."

Others say October is late. "Theoretically, it starts on Thanksgiving, but there's a lot of planning that starts before then," says Joseph T. Sinclair, author of *eBay Business the Smart Way*. "If you don't plan, you're going to get caught short. You won't know whether to promote something because you won't know whether you're going to get it in stock. September should be the target [planning] date for the [holiday shopping] season, so everybody's ready to go in November."

Early is the time to line up a trusted source of supply, especially for items you think will be your best movers. "Make sure you have reliable suppliers who are going to deliver when they say they will," stresses Schepp. "What could be worse than trying to put your listings up on December 15 because the product you were promised by November didn't show up [on time]?"

Another key early task is staffing. "This is not a time to scrimp," says Schepp. "You might have to hire people to get your shipments out, and those are things you don't want to be putting in place the first week of December. You want to make sure you have everything ready to go."

You may also want to change your look and feel. "Have your webmaster dress up your pages with a Christmas theme instead of using your normal template for your [item listings]," suggests Sinclair. One specific suggestion is to take advantage of the eBay gift icon. The wrapped-gift logo tells shoppers you can help them check an item off their to-do list by gift-wrapping their purchases and mailing them directly to gift recipients.

CELEBRATE ALL YEAR LONG

Don't assume you've got it made because you nailed Christmas. The final quarter is the biggest for most eBay sellers, but it's not the only important holiday season. For some on eBay, it's not even the most important. "Halloween is a real good one," says online sales expert Debra Schepp. Valentine's Day and Mother's Day herald sales surges for flowers, perfume, candy and jewelry; themed decorations can be hot for Easter and the Fourth of July.

Shipshape Shipping

Offering gift-wrapping and delivery to a gift recipient can be a powerful word-of-mouth tool for expanding

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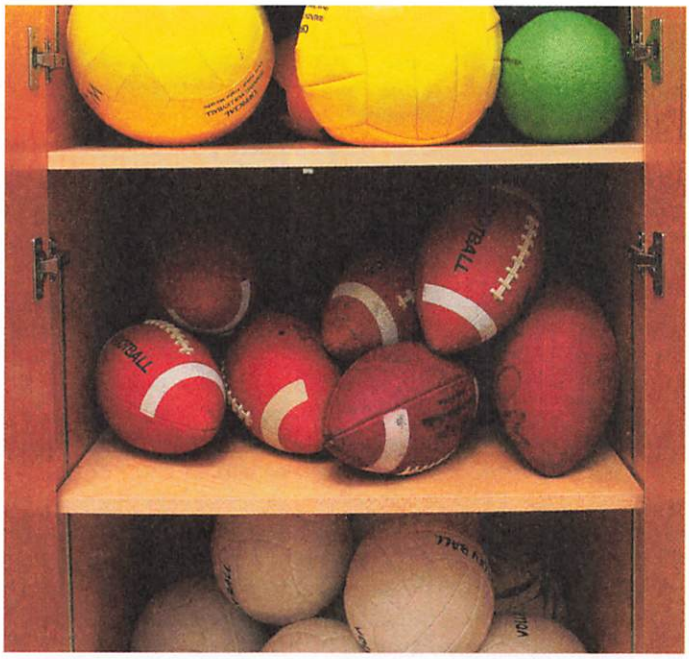

your marketing, says Barbara Weltman, a small-business consultant and author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting an eBay Business*. When the wrapped gifts arrive, recipients will be exposed to your business, Weltman says. "This is an opportunity to reach people who aren't your customers, and perhaps gain new customers."

You may want to offer free shipping on Buy It Now items, says Schepp. "If you offer it strictly for Buy It Now customers, you're giving them a little bonus, and you're also encouraging people who want to get their shopping done and don't want to wait five or six days for your [listing] to end."

Whether you decide to offer free shipping or not, make sure you ship sold items quickly, says Kitchener. "The main thing we do is ship fast, especially at Christmastime," he says. "You get all kinds of people with deadlines." Dangerous Threads ships via the U.S. Postal Service and FedEx Ground, and usually ships items within 24 to 48 hours, which gives most shoppers enough cushion to make sure their items arrive in time for the holidays.

Because of those deadlines, take extra care to clearly explain shipping policies in your listings. Consider how you could simplify your shipping policies to make everything as fast and easy as possible for the hurried gift-purchaser. Says Hassler, "We include a standard shipping rate to the U.S., Canada and other international locations so people aren't slowed down by having to write to us and ask for [the shipping costs]."

When designing holiday listings, make sure your terms include accepting payment through PayPal. Faster payment means faster shipping, which makes it easier for shoppers to make their deadlines.

To make it even more likely that gift-buyers will make their deadlines, you can and should consider refusing to guarantee holiday arrival after a certain date. "People will buy things on the 23rd of December, expecting to have them before Christmas," explains Hassler. "That's been a problem, so we'll quit having [listings] a few days before."

Kitchener stops selling some products much earlier, particularly custom items. "We make some beautiful custom guitar straps," he says, "and we'll cut off the orders for those about three weeks before Christmas because

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MAKE A LIST, CHECK IT TWICE . . .

You'll be in great shape to take advantage of the busy holiday season if you prepare in advance for the rush. This handy checklist will help you prioritize what needs to be done:

- **GET STARTED EARLY,** as many consumers start their holiday shopping as early as October.
- **SIGN UP FOR PAYPAL** (www.paypal.com), and offer it on all your listings.
- **CHECK YOUR EBAY PREFERENCES,** and update your listing and shipping policies if necessary. You can also change your default template to give your pages a "holiday" theme.
- **FIND RELIABLE SUPPLY SOURCES.** Make sure they'll be able to deliver when they say they can.
- **IF YOU SELL CUSTOM-MADE ITEMS,** stock up on bestsellers, and start your listings early.
- **GATHER MARKETPLACE DATA** via a Completed Listings search or other method.
- **SELL IN-DEMAND PRODUCTS** to boost sales this holiday season. Check Seller Central (www.ebay.com/sellercentral) for hot items.
- **FOR A USEFUL MERCHANDISING** and promotion calendar of important dates, visit http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/calendar.html.
- **CHECK THIRD-PARTY SOURCES** for the scoop on what's hot. Terapeak Marketing Research (www.terapeak.com) offers its own "Hot List" reports, based on eBay data going back as far as a year. The buzz on upcoming movies can be found at ComingSoon.net and Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). And check out "Hot Stuff" on page 48 for our preview of 2005's top sellers.
- **ASSESS STAFFING REQUIREMENTS,** and hire temps if necessary.
- **ORDER EBAY/USPS CO-BRANDED SHIPPING BOXES** from the U.S. Postal Service.
- **ORDER WRAPPING PAPER AND GIFT ENCLOSURE CARDS.** The eBay Shop (www.theebayshop.com) sells eBay wrapping paper; type "paper" into the search box to find it.
- **RECONFIGURE YOUR SHIPPING ASSEMBLY LINE** to accommodate special requests, such as wrapping gifts and shipping directly to gift recipients.
- **EXPLAIN SHIPPING PRICES** and policies clearly to buyers. Consider offering free shipping on Buy It Now items.

of the shop time required to make the items." Be sure not to promise buyers items you can't deliver.

Hess employs a more complex solution. As the number of days before Christmas shrinks, Hess Fine Art reduces the lengths of its listings. From the usual 10 days, Hess goes to seven-, five-, three- and even one-day listings. The formula is simple: "Count the days to Christmas, subtract the days for shipping, and figure when those auctions will end."

Selling Policies

You should also consider your terms of sale. Start by thinking about adding more Buy It Now items. "Impulse buys are better that way," says Hassler, who does primarily Buy It Now sales during the holidays instead of the auction-style listings that are her usual method. "People don't want to wait a week to get a book that someone else may have on Buy It Now." To increase the speed of the sale, use Buy It Now with immediate payments through PayPal. The transaction is instantaneous and saves you critical time spent waiting for payment.

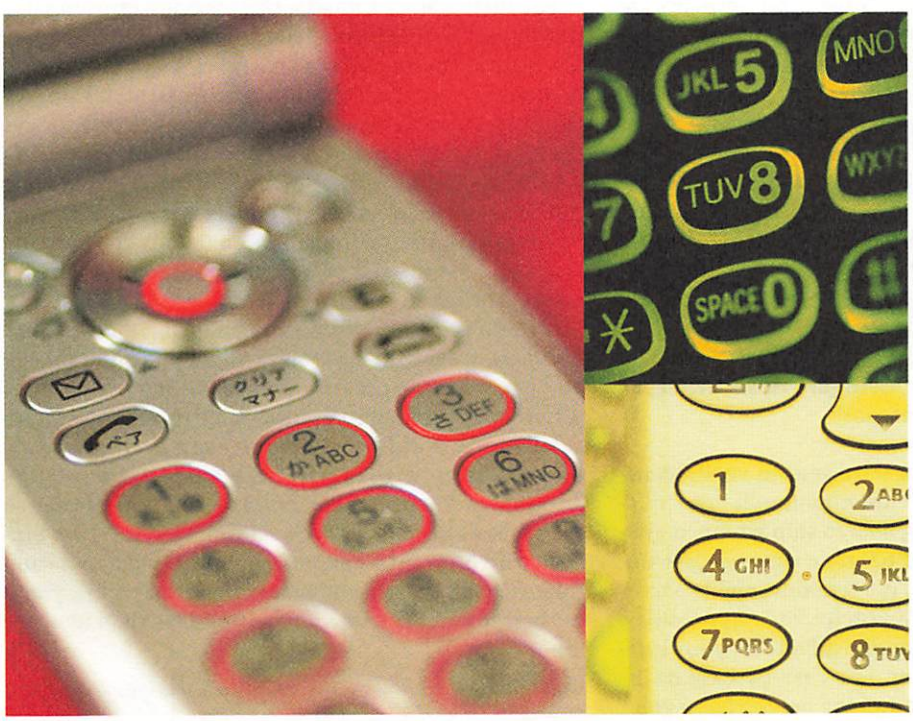
During the holidays, it may be more important for you to offer PayPal Buyer Credit, which allows your buyers to finance their purchases through GE Money Bank, the financial entity behind PayPal Buyer Credit. "During the rest of the year, it might not be worthwhile for some sellers," says Sinclair. "But during Christmas, when everyone is scrambling for money to buy gifts, they might [offer] it for one month."

SAVE THE DATES

Your customers expect their purchases to arrive on time for the holidays, so it's critical you ensure every item ships when you say it will. These guidelines on shipping basics can help you stay on top of deadlines—and keep your customers happy:

- **MAKE SURE LAST-MINUTE SHOPPERS** know your terms and policies. Tell them clearly and in advance if what they're buying won't arrive in time, or if getting it there requires extra shipping fees.
- **KEEP IN MIND THAT NEITHER** FedEx nor UPS delivers on Christmas Day; however, both offer one-day shipping services. An item shipped on December 23 will arrive the next day. The U.S. Postal Service does not deliver normal mail on Christmas Day. However, if an order is shipped using Express Mail, the USPS will attempt delivery on December 25, unless it's a Sunday.
- **PRIORITY MAIL FROM USPS,** which usually takes two to three days to deliver, can take up to two weeks in the busy month of December, so plan accordingly. Guaranteed service by your carrier of choice is the best way to go.
- **DIFFERENT DEADLINES APPLY** when you're shipping internationally, so check with your carrier in advance for details.

When everyone is scrambling, they're more likely to buy the wrong item, one that doesn't fit, or one that just isn't what the recipient had in mind. For that reason, returns tend to go up during and shortly after the holidays. So it's important to keep a relaxed attitude toward customers who, after being relatively easy to please all year, have suddenly turned uncertain, demanding and difficult during the holidays.



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"You have to be a little more liberal and a little more giving and caring," as Hess puts it. "You have to be more friendly and more forgiving, because clients are more emotional then in their buying habits."

Holiday Hurdles

Holiday selling isn't, in fact, all about having fun and making a bunch of money. The holidays present special challenges in addition to trickier sourcing and more frequent returns.

For instance, if you gift-wrap and send items directly to the recipients, you won't be protected by the PayPal Seller Protection Policy, because

HOT STUFF

Before making your list of products to stock this holiday season, make sure you check out the latest "Hot Categories Report" at http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/whatshot.html. As you approach the high tide of holiday sales, the reports available here will tell you where both demand and bids for items are growing.

But why stop there? There's a lot more you can do to find out what is likely to sell well for the holidays. For instance, some categories are always in demand. Perennial holiday winners include cameras, cell phones, clothing, collectibles, dolls and bears, electronics, jewelry and watches, sporting goods and, of course, toy and hobby items.

Want to know which items will be especially hot this year? Check the roster of Hollywood films slated for holiday release, suggests Jim Migdal, senior category manager for eBay Toys & Hobbies. "Those always drive sales," he explains.

With that in mind, this December 9, Walt Disney Co. will release *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, based on the perpetually popular children's books by C.S. Lewis. You can find more info on upcoming movies at ComingSoon.net and Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com).

You can also find information about the categories you specialize in. The scoop on hot toys, for instance, can be found in forecasts by *Toy Wishes* (www.toywishes.com). In the spring and fall, this journal's editors list toys they think will be most in demand during the summer and holiday seasons. Another way to find forecasts for what will be hot this holiday season: Type "holiday watch 2005" into an internet search engine, and check out the results.

Sellers of dolls and collectibles can reliably predict increased demand for certain items during the holidays. Prewar Lionel trains, Hot Wheels cars from the 1960s, and bisque dolls from France and Germany are always scarce and in demand at the holidays, explains Migdal.

Climate also plays a role with holiday hot-sellers such as sporting goods and clothing. That's why ski jackets will tend to outsell bathing suits. And when it comes to popular categories such as electronics and jewelry, consider offering more expensive items than you might at other times of the year—shoppers' wallets are open, and they are, after all, in a giving mood.

Finally, keep an eye on current events, and stay alert for one-of-a-kind opportunities. One of these occurred when a manufacturer mistakenly made just 6,000 Polar Express trains. Says Migdal, "They sold out very quickly, and we saw them on eBay for two or three times the list price." For the latest hot sellers by category, go to Seller Central (www.ebay.com/sellercentral). Click on "Category Tips," then click on "In Demand" under the appropriate category.

that applies only when items are sent to verified addresses. You'll need to decide how much your customers will appreciate being able to ship wrapped gifts directly to recipients, and balance that against the value of PayPal coverage. "It is very convenient to have items shipped directly to the recipient," says Collier, who adds that you don't have to advertise your gift-wrap policy, but can apply it on a case-by-case basis. "If you get a special request and the person has a good feedback rating and you're comfortable with the situation, you might want to do it," she says. If you do choose to offer gift services, practice your due diligence. It's a great strategy for the holidays that could lead to many more sales.

Another issue: Since every other holiday-savvy eBay seller is going to be tuned in and looking for the next hot product, it's going to be that much harder for you to be first. And if you do happen to find yourself with a garage full of hot-selling items, your holiday-happy rivals may realize it nearly as soon as you do and flood the market with their own similar items. "If you find something is selling really well, you can't be complacent with it," warns Schepp. "Ultimately, it's going to show up on the hot list, and everybody's going to see it. You can easily end up with an overstocked item when the bottom drops out." Use eBay resources such as the "Hot Categories Report" and Completed Items searches to keep tabs on the competition and avoid having too much "me, too" product on hand.

Remember, as eBay has grown into a global, multicultural phenomenon, the meaning of the holidays has gotten less clear in terms of the entire audience of buyers on eBay. So while you should certainly try to take advantage of the end-of-the-year gifting binge, it's also important to do it in a way that recognizes cultural differences. Many eBay buyers don't celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or other year-end holidays, or they celebrate differently.

For instance, in Canada, the biggest shopping day of the year is traditionally not the day after Thanksgiving, but the day after Christmas, a holiday known as Boxing Day and celebrated in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand. Keep such differences in mind. Advertising only a "holiday sale" instead of a "Christmas sale" will help you remain inclusive. "You need to be selling for everybody," advises Collier, who suggests simply promoting a "sale" in your listing titles and saving the rest of the character count for important keywords.

If there's one overriding and enduring theme to the holidays, it may be that this is when you should keep an open mind, be creative and be willing to do things differently. While it's certainly nice to get some extra sales at the holidays, it can be even better to learn something new that will help sustain your sales throughout the year. "The holidays are a great time to experiment because there's a lot of traffic," says Sinclair. "If you want to experiment with what sells and what doesn't, what sells better on sale and off, you'll get better feedback during the holidays than at other times of year." ■

MARK HENRICKS *writes on business and technology for leading publications and is author of* Not Just a Living.

Flow With the Grow

NOT SURE HOW YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP UP WITH YOUR GROWING BUSINESS ON EBAY? DON'T WORRY—THERE ARE TOOLS TO HELP.

BY NICHOLE L. TORRES

You've been successfully selling your wares on eBay for a while, and you're seeing a greater demand for your products. Now that you've gotten a taste of success, you're hooked—and you want more. So how do you take your business on eBay to the next level? We asked Susan Phillips, vice president of marketing at eBay, for some tips.

First, examine how you're running your business, and look for places you might be more efficient, suggests Phillips. "Are there tools you're not using that could help you be more productive?" she asks. "Or [perhaps] you've gotten to a point where you started with a very basic tool and you need to upgrade." The listing tools offered by eBay, for instance, can help you create multiple listings at once, which will save you a lot of time. Turbo Lister, in particular, is designed to help medium- to high-volume sellers.

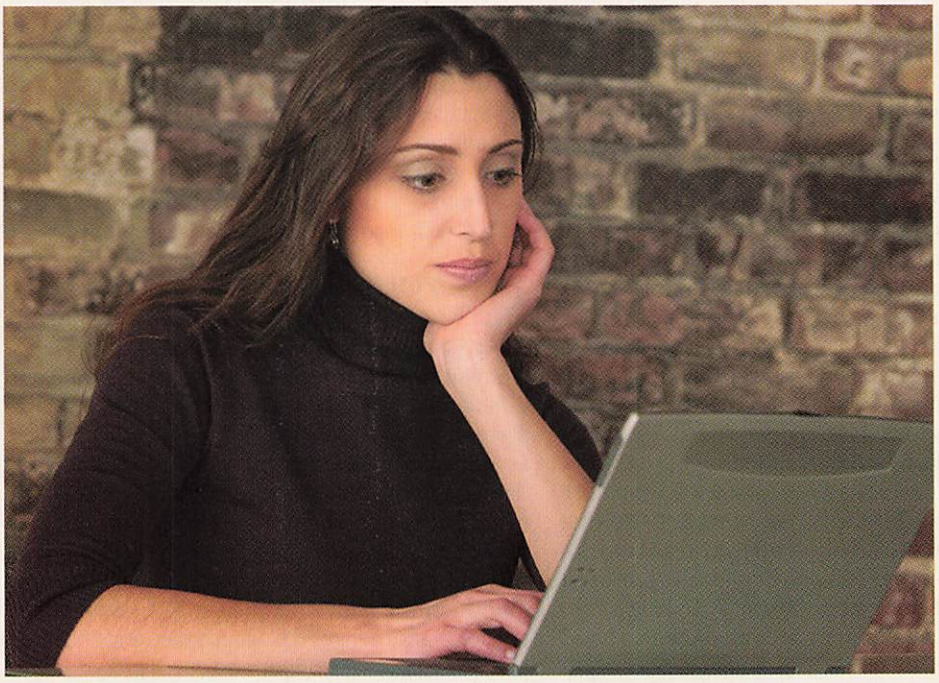
Next, look at your fulfillment side—packing and shipping items can be a huge time drain on your growing enterprise. "eBay has relationships with organizations like UPS and the U.S. Postal Service that allow sellers to calculate the shipping cost upfront and print shipping labels at home—there are even eBay/USPS co-branded boxes sellers can get for free," says Phillips. "These little time-savers make a big difference when you're shipping a lot of items."

Once you get your back-office operations at optimum efficiency, you need to start thinking about inventory management—tracking the items you're selling and how much profit you're making. Inventory management also helps you decipher when you need new sources of merchandise for your growing business. Say you've sold out of your original inventory or you've exhausted your original supply line. There are many different ways to find products, says Phillips, from grass-roots-type tactics—such as canvassing local estate sales, garage sales and outlet malls for low-cost inventory—to asking friends, relatives and neighbors if they have anything they'd like you to sell.

Or you can take a more formal step and become part of eBay's Trading Assistant Program. When you do, you can list your services on eBay's Trading Assistant Directory, where people with products they want help selling can find you, says Phillips. If you want to buy larger lots of items, you can check out eBay's wholesale section, or try the Reseller Marketplace. This is a venue for sellers to liquidate returned, refurbished or otherwise excess inventory in bulk lots to eBay PowerSellers for resale on eBay and through other channels.

Your overall growth strategy will depend largely on your personal goals for your business, says Phillips. Do you want it to be a part-time gig or a full-time sole proprietorship? Or do you envision opening a complete online store, selling hundreds of products and requiring staff? When you're constantly asking friends and family to help you fulfill orders, it's a good sign you're ready to hire help, Phillips says.

Finally, there's an enormous number of resources for sellers on eBay to help you grow. From the listing programs to online forums to real-life eBay educational seminars in your community, you can find a way to build a larger eBay enterprise. "Be as disciplined as possible—there are ways to make [operations] a little more efficient," says Phillips. "And by doing so, you'll save yourself enough time to grow your business that much further." ■



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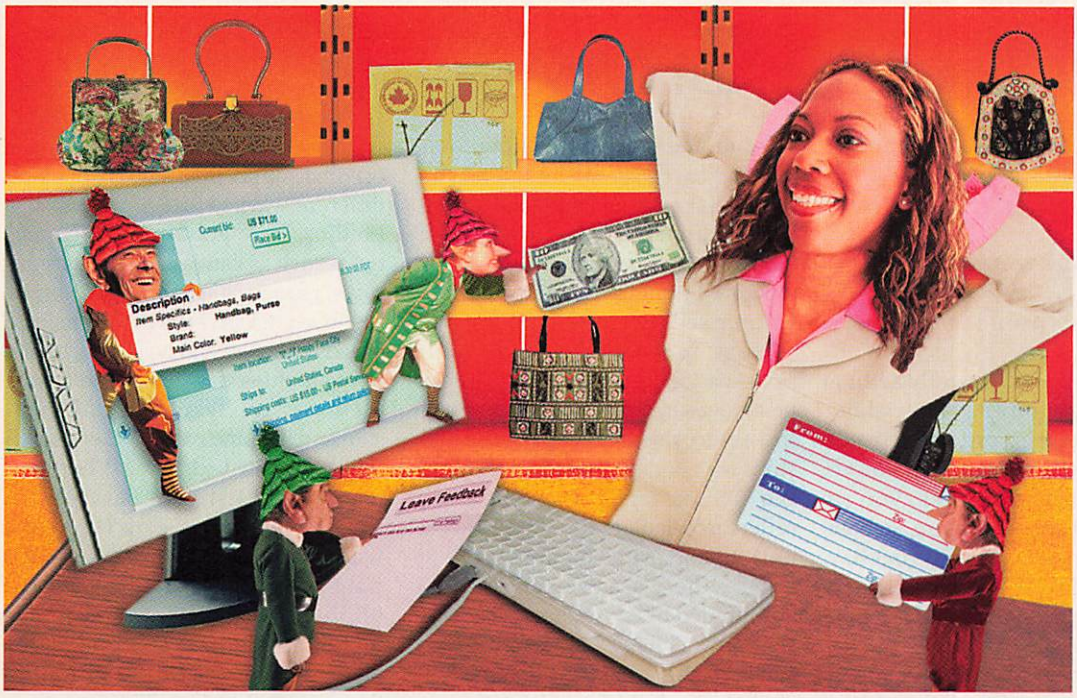


Disk Drive

GET YOUR BUSINESS ON EBAY UP TO FULL SPEED WITH THESE SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS.

BY AMANDA C. KOOSER

As eBay has grown, so has the availability of eBay's little helpers: listing software. Listing software, whether it's in the form of programs that you install or applications that run over the web, can save you time, help you build more advanced listings and simplify the whole process. Automation is the key. When you no longer have to manually relist items or send out individual buyer notifications, you have more time to spend on building your business.

Growing businesses should start with eBay's built-in features. Its free, downloadable Turbo Lister lets you list multiple items at once, access HTML templates, reuse listings and create listings with an intuitive design editor. If you're already taking advantage of Turbo Lister, it might be time to move up to the basic version of Selling Manager ($4.99 per month) for tracking your listing activities, printing labels and invoices, and creating custom templates. Some other handy programs you can try include:

❖ **AUCTIVA (WWW.AUCTIVA.COM):** Auctiva has a variety of web-based services for eBay sellers, including everything from a listing designer with customizable templates to image hosting and scheduling. The best news of all is that the offerings are completely free. Auctiva recently reorganized itself from being a pay service, so look for new features to be rolled out soon.

❖ **MARKETWORKS (WWW.MARKETWORKS.COM):** Marketworks offers a full-featured suite of listing services along with a good customer-service reputation. Growing businesses that are looking to bring their websites and eBay sales in line can take advantage of Marketworks' integration and management capabilities. The pricing structure varies with the volume of sales and the features used, but you should expect a monthly fee starting at about $30.

❖ **SALES MANAGER FROM VENDIO (WWW.VENDIO.COM):** This program comes in a couple of different editions. The Inventory Edition is geared toward sellers who tend to list multiples of the same items and are willing to put in a little time to learn how to use the more advanced automation features. The Merchandising Edition works best for sellers who tend to offer unique items and want a fast solution that can be mastered and implemented in less than an hour.

With Sales Manager, you also get your choice of ways to pay. Monthly plans start at just $12.95, or you can choose to jump onboard for a yearly subscription at $250. Not ready to commit? You can also choose to pay as you go. Listing fees in addition to the service fees can apply. ■

TAKE YOUR PICK

Andale (www.andale.com) is one of the biggest movers and shakers in listing software. Services range from eBay pricing research to image storage and e-mail management. Andale works on an a la carte system, so you choose which components you need. For added savings, check into its discounted bundles. The 110 Listings Quick Pack, for example, includes the price-finder service, 10MB of image storage, professional counters and a gallery with 110 ad listings for $34.95 per month. That saves you nearly $10 per month off the individual pricing. The Andale Lister service is another good place to start, and the plans are easy to upgrade as your business grows.

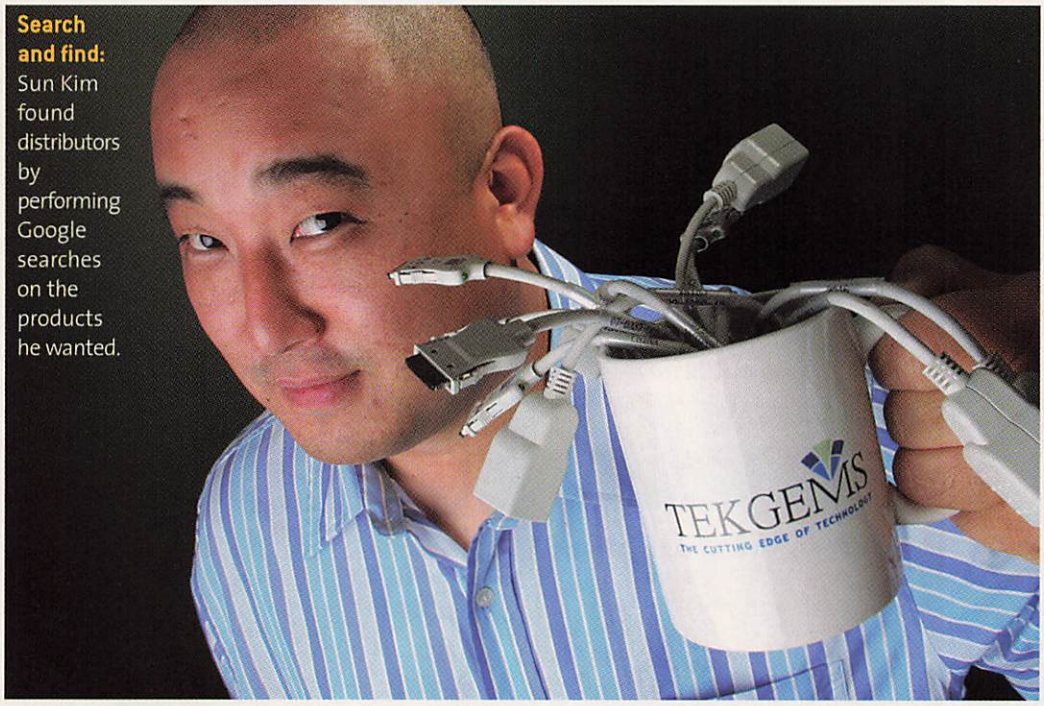
ILLUSTRATION © SIMONE TIEBER

Home ▸ Resource Centers ▸ eBay Startup Center
ebay Business Center
It's a consensus. There really is no easier way to sell online than through online auctions. But that doesn't mean you can just throw up a product and wait for buyers to flock. It takes much more work and planning than that. So whether you're starting a new auction-only venture or seeking to expand your current business, this guide will help you find success. So get ready for the bids to start rolling in!
How to Start an ebay Business
Getting Started on eBay
• Exploring the World of eBay
• Time to Shop
• Get Acquainted With the eBay Community
• eBay First Steps
Deciding What to Sell
Pre-Sale Preparation
• Creating a Solid Plan
• Pricing Your Goods
• Posting Products for Sale
• The Basics of Seller Fees
During the Sale
• Stay in Control With These Time-Management Tips
• Protecting Yourself
• Providing Good Customer Service

www.entrepreneur.com/ebay

IT'S A CONSENSUS. THERE REALLY IS NO EASIER WAY TO SELL ONLINE THAN THROUGH ONLINE AUCTIONS. But that doesn't mean you can just throw up a product and wait for buyers to flock. It takes much more work and planning than that. So whether you're starting a new auction-only venture or seeking to expand your current business, this site will help you find success.

Entrepreneur.com



Search and find: Sun Kim found distributors by performing Google searches on the products he wanted.

Bigger Deals

FIND A STEADY STREAM OF PRODUCTS TO BECOME A RELIABLE EBAY SELLER.

BY JULIE MONAHAN

When you'd rather spend more time selling than searching for products, it's time to consider more reliable sources of merchandise.

No one can deny the thrill of posting a garage-sale find or department-store clearance item on eBay and snagging 10 times what you paid for it or more. But you have to put up with the feast-or-famine nature of sourcing your business this way. Now that you know how eBay works, you're ready to take on the bigger deals and larger volumes that will produce a steady stream of product and establish you as a reliable seller among eBay shoppers.

Wholesale distributors, liquidators, closeout distributors and job-lot traders offer a virtually unlimited choice of product, though quality and quantity will vary. For access to these suppliers, you'll need a state resale number, which allows you to buy wholesale anywhere in the country. Manufacturers and wholesalers may also set minimum orders, so you must first decide how much merchandise you can afford to buy and store.

Some wholesale distributors and manufacturers avoid internet businesses because they consider them unstable or unprofitable. But according to Chris Malta, CEO of Worldwide Brands Inc., a product sourcing research publisher in Orlando, Florida, there is a subset of suppliers that tailor their businesses to online sellers such as those on eBay. These "light bulk" wholesalers, as Worldwide Brands refers to them, offer minimum orders of $500 or less.

Locating a wholesale distributor who supplies what you want to sell isn't always easy, but Sun W. Kim, 30, founder of TekGems Inc. (eBay User ID: tekgems), found a novel way to do it. The San Francisco electronics entrepreneur did Google searches for the model numbers of products he wanted—searches that often led right to distributors' websites. "Pretty soon, I knew who the distributors were and whom to talk to," Kim says.

Now, it seems the manufacturers find him, using the same technique to check on their products. "I probably have a supplier or manufacturer interested in selling me something once a week," Kim says.

Marsha Collier, an eBay PowerSeller and author of several books about eBay, recommends eBay itself as a product source. Using search terms such as *lot*, *case quantity*, *surplus* or *pallet*, sellers can find liquidated merchandise and closeouts from providers too busy to sell the products individually. Liquidation.com is also a popular source for finding these goods.

Buying from liquidators offers a significant price benefit, but you never know what you'll get. "You'll find good bargains," Malta says, "but you can also end up with items taken from breakage piles."

Whom you buy from also depends on what you want to sell. Avoid product categories where oversupply has dropped prices too low to provide a profit. Asad Haroon, general manager of GoWholesale.com, a Washington, DC-based search portal for the wholesale and small-business sectors, recommends buying merchandise related to a hot item. Instead of adding to the glut of cell phones, for example, sell cell-phone plates or car adapters. "You may not have as big a demand," Haroon says, "but there won't be a lot of other people selling [them]."

Whatever you sell, opt for items that will maintain your interest in the business. "If you hate the items you're selling," Collier says, "you're really going to be bored." ■

PHOTO COURTESY: SUN W. KIM

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the eyes have it

BY CATHERINE SEDA

BRING IN THE CROWDS WITH THESE SIMPLE TIPS TO DRAW USERS IN AND GET THEM INTERESTED.

Unfortunately, many eBay Store owners are missing easy sales opportunities. But don't despair—it's a breeze to edit your Store, your "About Me" page and your listings to turn unresponsive surfers into your best customers.

Drive Customers to Your eBay Store

Help shoppers find your Store by optimizing it for search engines. According to Todd Lutwak, director of seller development for eBay, you can get additional free traffic by using keywords in your Store title (35 characters), Store description (300 characters) and custom category names (up to 20).

To discover which keywords (and merchandise) will attract eBay shoppers to your Store, check out the "What's Hot" section of eBay's Seller Central (http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/whatshot.html). Also check your Store Traffic Report to improve your search engine marketing efforts.

Get Sales From Your "About Me" Page

Don't overlook the sales potential of this page. A beautifully designed page helps establish a brand for your company and helps you sell more products. Curtis Thornhill, seller development manager for eBay, offers these suggestions:

- **WOW 'EM.** Use a logo and high-quality photos to show that your business is credible and trustworthy. The copy you write does this, too. For example, share a few lines about how your business got started or how your team finds superior products.
- **HOOK 'EM.** Now that you've got shoppers' attention, invite people into your Store. The "About Me" page is the perfect place to showcase your best items. Use product photos and call them your "Top Sellers," "Hot Deals" or "New Arrivals." Organize your product categories into a clickable index so visitors will be enticed to start shopping.
- **SELL 'EM.** Tell people to take action. Pepper your page with "Buy It Now" or "Bid Now" copy. And be sure to prominently display your contact information for potential customers who have questions before buying from you.

Attract More and Higher Listing Offers

Just as with your eBay Store, use relevant keywords in your listing titles and subtitles to help eBay searchers find your listings. To get more bids on your items, try these tested tips:

- **TAKE WELL-LIT** and close-range product photos.
- **DISPLAY THE PHOTO** at the top of each listing.
- **SET A SIZZLING STARTING PRICE** and a reasonable shipping fee.
- **INCLUDE THE DETAILS:** type, brand, condition and other attributes.
- **IF YOUR DEAL IS HOT,** highlight the retail value.
- **CROSS-PROMOTE** your other listings.
- **CLEARLY STATE** your shipping, payment and customer-service policies.
- **ACCEPT PAYMENTS** through Paypal.

Shira Levine, senior manager of eBay's PowerSeller program, reminds eBay sellers to learn eBay's listing policies (http://pages.ebay.com/help/policies). These rules protect buyers and sellers, so violating them can keep buyers from bidding on your products and also cause your listings to be removed from the site.

Take a look at the examples on the following pages, then review your eBay Store, "About Me" page and listings. Your business may be just a few edits away from achieving mega sales success.

EBAY STORE HOME PAGE

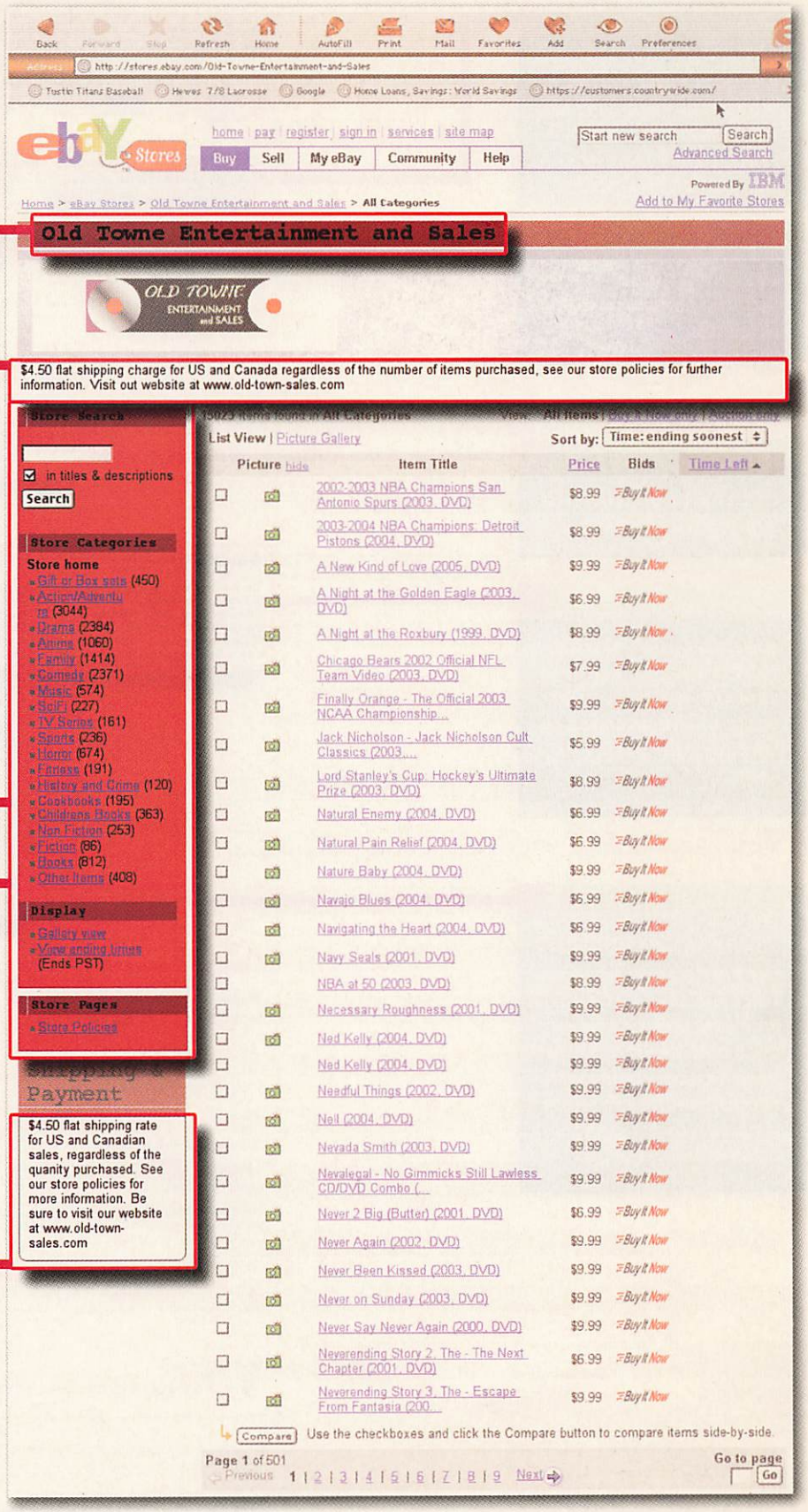
THIS STORE TITLE LACKS RELEVANT KEYWORDS, WHICH CAN DRIVE ADDITIONAL FREE TRAFFIC FROM EBAY AND SEARCH ENGINES.

WRITE A KEYWORD-RICH DESCRIPTION FOR YOUR EBAY STORE, AND CHOOSE A STORE TEMPLATE THAT DISPLAYS IT, NOT HIDES IT. THIS DESCRIPTION CAN INCREASE FREE STORE TRAFFIC FROM SEARCH ENGINES AND IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

A DARK BACKGROUND MAKES THE NAVIGATION BAR DIFFICULT TO SEE.

THIS EBAY STORE SELLS DVDS, SO THESE CUSTOM CATEGORY NAMES SHOULD INCLUDE THE IMPORTANT KEYWORD "DVD."

LINKING TO A WEBSITE OUTSIDE OF EBAY FROM YOUR STORE'S MAIN PAGE IS PROHIBITED.


Old Towne Entertainment and Sales
$4.50 flat shipping charge for US and Canada regardless of the number of items purchased, see our store policies for further information. Visit out website at www.old-town-sales.com
Store Search
in titles & descriptions
Search
Store Categories
Store home
Gift or Box sets (450)
Action/Adventure (3044)
Drama (2384)
Anime (1060)
Family (1414)
Comedy (2371)
Music (574)
SciFi (227)
TV Series (161)
Sports (236)
Horror (674)
Erotica (191)
History and Crime (120)
Cookbooks (195)
Childrens Books (363)
Non Fiction (253)
Fiction (86)
Books (812)
Other Items (408)
Display
Gallery view
View ending times (Ends PST)
Store Pages
Store Policies
Payment
$4.50 flat shipping rate for US and Canadian sales, regardless of the quanity purchased. See our store policies for more information. Be sure to visit our website at www.old-town-sales.com
List View | Picture Gallery
Sort by: Time: ending soonest
Picture
Item Title
Price
Bids
Time Left
2002-2003 NBA Champions San Antonio Spurs (2003, DVD)
2003-2004 NBA Champions: Detroit Pistons (2004, DVD)
A New Kind of Love (2005, DVD)
A Night at the Golden Eagle (2003, DVD)
A Night at the Roxbury (1999, DVD)
Chicago Bears 2002 Official NFL Team Video (2003, DVD)
Finally Orange - The Official 2003 NCAA Championship...
Jack Nicholson - Jack Nicholson Cult Classics (2003,...
Lord Stanley's Cup: Hockey's Ultimate Prize (2003, DVD)
Natural Enemy (2004, DVD)
Natural Pain Relief (2004, DVD)
Nature Baby (2004, DVD)
Navajo Blues (2004, DVD)
Navigating the Heart (2004, DVD)
Navy Seals (2001, DVD)
NBA at 50 (2003, DVD)
Necessary Roughness (2001, DVD)
Ned Kelly (2004, DVD)
Ned Kelly (2004, DVD)
Needful Things (2002, DVD)
Nell (2004, DVD)
Nevada Smith (2003, DVD)
Nevalegal - No Gimmicks Still Lawless CD/DVD Combo (...
Never 2 Big (Butter) (2001, DVD)
Never Again (2002, DVD)
Never Been Kissed (2003, DVD)
Never on Sunday (2003, DVD)
Never Say Never Again (2000, DVD)
Neverending Story 2, The - The Next Chapter (2001, DVD)
Neverending Story 3, The - Escape From Fantasia (200...
Compare
Use the checkboxes and click the Compare button to compare items side-by-side.
Page 1 of 501
Previous 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 Next
Go to page
Go

EBAY ITEM LISTING

USE ALL 55 CHARACTERS, INCLUDING RELEVANT KEYWORDS, IN YOUR LISTING TITLE FOR THE BEST RESULTS FROM THE EBAY AND INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES.

THE STARTING BID IS TOO HIGH TO GENERATE MUCH INTEREST.

OVERPRICED SHIPPING TURNS OFF CUSTOMERS.

MAKE SURE YOUR DESCRIPTION IS FREE OF ERRORS. EXPLAIN YOUR RETURN POLICY, AND INCLUDE A LINK TO YOUR "ABOUT ME" PAGE.

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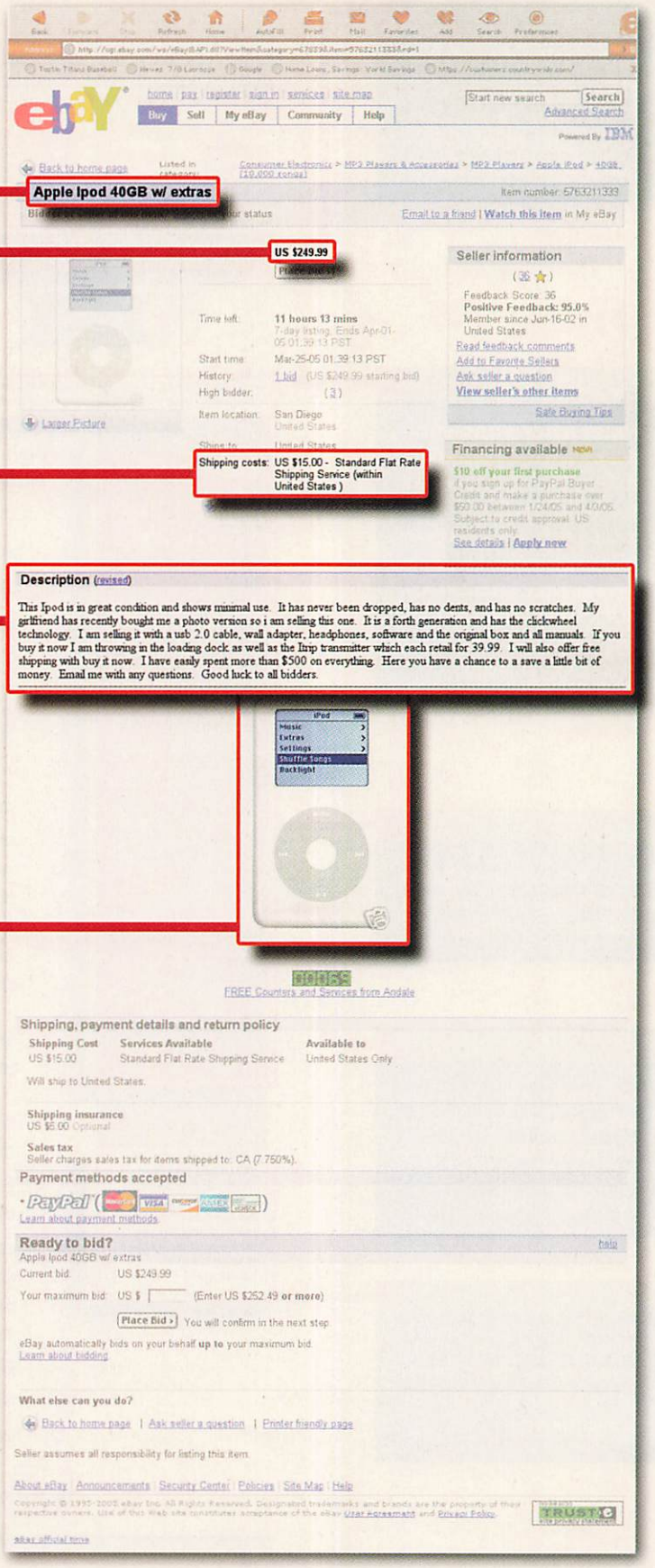

Apple Ipod 40GB w/ extras
US $249.99
Shipping costs: US $15.00 - Standard Flat Rate Shipping Service (within United States)
Description (revised)
This Ipod is in great condition and shows minimal use. It has never been dropped, has no dents, and has no scratches. My girlfriend has recently bought me a photo version so i am selling this one. It is a forth generation and has the clickwheel technology. I am selling it with a usb 2.0 cable, wall adapter, headphones, software and the original box and all manuals. If you buy it now I am throwing in the loading dock as well as the Imp transmitter which each retail for 39.99. I will also offer free shipping with buy it now. I have easily spent more than $500 on everything. Here you have a chance to a save a little bit of money. Email me with any questions. Good luck to all bidders.
Seller information
Shipping, payment details and return policy
Payment methods accepted
Ready to bid?

BEST IN STORE WINNERS: 2005

The eBay community has spoken! Out of the thousands of Store nominations received, three final winners were selected and announced on May 18 based on headers, categories, custom pages, logos, colors and promotion boxes. Congratulations to Puffy Pillow Productions for "Best-Looking Store," The Frenchy Bee for "Best Shopping Experience" and Period Paper for "Best Store Custom Pages." The winners received $1,500 or a trip to eBay Live! 2005.

Below are a few winning ideas from Puffy Pillow Productions. ■

CATHERINE SEDA *(www.sedacommunication.com) is the "Net Sales" columnist for* Entrepreneur *magazine. She also teaches search engine marketing at eBay University and in her book,* Search Engine Advertising.

A CUSTOM LOGO SHOWS OFF THIS STORE'S PERSONALITY.

SEARCH AND THEME-BASED NAVIGATIONAL OPTIONS ARE EASY TO SEE.

PROMOTIONAL BOXES HIGHLIGHT HOT DEALS AND PERSONALIZATION SERVICES.

THE STORE USES AN EFFECTIVE MIX OF PRODUCT PHOTOS, CUSTOM GRAPHICS AND ATTENTION-GRABBING COLORS AND CATEGORY NAMES.

Time Is MONEY

BY JANELLE ELMS

Successful entrepreneurs know that every minute counts. Stop wasting your valuable time doing menial tasks. Use these tricks to free up time and boost your business.

Many PowerSellers share tales of coming to a point in their businesses where 24 hours in a day just wasn't enough. They realized a person, company, process or piece of software could allow them time to become more productive. Here are some of the PowerSellers' time-tested secrets for being successful on eBay:

Tools for Automation

The eBay Solutions Directory (http://solutions.ebay.com) is a good starting place for finding quality solutions providers that can help increase your productivity in selling, listing, product sourcing and much more.

Brad Lerch, owner of ListAssist in Blandon, Pennsylvania (eBay User ID: listassist), tested various auction management programs to help streamline his business and chose Kyozou (www.kyozou.com) to do the job. This efficient software helped speed the sales process and freed up Lerch, 29, to grow his business. Two weeks after implementing the software, and only four months after the business's inception, Lerch became a PowerSeller. His company now helps businesses liquidate their overstock.

Worrying about how much a tool costs is one of the biggest mistakes new—and even experienced—entrepreneurs make. When evaluating solutions to help scale your business, ask yourself if the cost of the product or service justifies the return on your investment.

Creating an eBay Store

Upon setting up their eBay Stores correctly, many eBay sellers have typically seen an increase of 25 percent in sales within three months. This increase in exposure was exactly what PowerSeller Rob Smith (eBay Store: http://stores.ebay.com/glock-promo-

Get into the groove: A newspaper story proved a valuable—and free—marketing tool that helped make Bill Cartmel's business on eBay a hit.

PHOTO © JUPE STONE

LOVE
CLASSIC
LP'S

accessories-and-apparel) was seeking for his Freeport, New York-based business on eBay. "Opening my eBay Store and using auctions as a tool to drive business not only increased my profits, but lowered my overall fees as well," says Smith, 48.

eBay Stores offers a fully customizable e-commerce solution for your business. For as little as $15.95 a month, eBay Stores helps build your business brand, provide you with seller reporting tools to analyze your sales and, most important, provide a vehicle to get your store and your listings indexed in the major search engines. An eBay Store is integral to easily scaling your business without having to invest time and money in the creation of a website with a shopping cart.

Plus, where else can you get an e-commerce site that ends up on the big search engines such as Google for less than $20 per month?

Learn more about opening an eBay Store at http://stores.ebay.com.

Marketing Made Easy

Successful PowerSellers realize that marketing is a required part of their business, and many use inexpensive guerrilla marketing techniques to promote their businesses. Techniques include knowing where to get unlimited free business cards (www.vistaprint.com), tapping into the power of the eBay e-mail marketing program within their eBay Stores, and taking advantage of eBay's popularity to help boost the visibility of their own businesses.

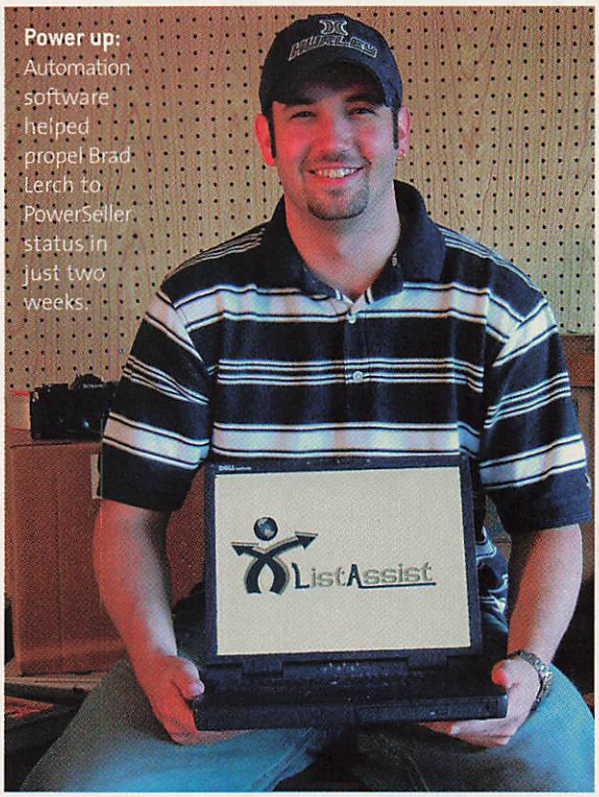
"I had a very definite turning point in my eBay selling career," says Lewiston, Maine, PowerSeller Bill Cartmel, 52 (eBay Store: http://stores.ebay.com/billstuff). "An article about our eBay business in our local newspaper was picked up by newspapers throughout New England and the Eastern Seaboard. The focus was on vinyl records, which were only a small part of our business at the time. I received so many responses from people from New York to Maine who wanted to sell their rare, high-end record collections that we have now become the fifth largest seller of LPs on eBay, and our goal is to become No. 1."

Selling Internationally

Many sellers are looking outside the boundaries of the United States as a way to increase their customer base. eBay offers these five solutions for selling internationally:

1. ACCEPT PAYPAL AS A PAYMENT OPTION. PayPal is now available in 56 countries and territories and accepts multiple forms of currency, including euros, Canadian dollars and yen.

2. OFFER INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING. Maximize your global exposure by choosing which countries you're willing to ship to.



Power up: Automation software helped propel Brad Lerch to PowerSeller status in just two weeks.

3. INCLUDE SHIPPING COSTS. eBay's Shipping Calculator makes it easy for you to offer international shipping options and instant pricing to your buyers.

4. USE ITEM SPECIFICS. A little-known eBay fact: When you fill out the item specifics for your item, such as the size of those shoes you are selling, that number will be translated on the eBay international site it is viewed on.

5. DOWNLOAD THE INTERNATIONAL SELLING TOOLKIT (http://pages.ebay.com/globaltrade/sellingtoolkit.pdf). This in-depth report is the best place to start when targeting your international buyers.

Find additional information about selling internationally at http://pages.ebay.com/globaltrade.

Sourcing More Products

A joint study by eBay and ACNielsen recently concluded that the number-one barrier to increasing sales on eBay was finding products to sell on the site.

Although selling items found at garage sales and secondhand stores can be profitable, many PowerSellers would rather sell products they can purchase from consistent suppliers. Instead of taking one picture, creating one listing, shipping the item in a single box, then starting over again, a PowerSeller would rather purchase 500 of the same item, take one picture, create one listing, use the same size box over and over again, and hit "relist" for the additional inventory.

It's difficult to find legitimate and thorough sourcing information. Many PowerSellers have come to trust two companies, What Do I Sell and Worldwide Brands Inc.

What Do I Sell (www.whatdoisell.com) is an eBay Certified Provider that teaches eBay sellers creative, professional strategies and techniques for selecting

PHOTO COURTESY: BRAD LERCH

products to sell on eBay, locating legitimate suppliers and effectively selling in the eBay Marketplace.

Worldwide Brands (www.worldwidebrands.com), a Certified Solution Provider, is the only directory publisher of drop-ship and wholesale product sourcing information on the internet.

Find a unique wholesale buying opportunity through eBay's wholesale listing portal at www.ebay.com/wholesale.

Streamlining Shipping

Though shipping is one of the more time-consuming processes of selling online, it can be automated easily in two ways. First, make sure your shipping area is organized and accessible. Next, reduce or eliminate the time you spend waiting in line at the post office by printing your postage online and having the U.S. Postal Service pick up your packages at your house. "One of my best business decisions was to start using Endicia [www.endicia.com] for my postage needs," explains Charlene Anderson, director of online sales for Main Event in Jackson, Wyoming (http://stores.ebay.com/main-event-books-and-movies). "It's fast and easy to use—a great timesaver."

eBay's integrated shipping solutions allow you to print labels, pay for postage through PayPal, and set up a time when USPS picks up your packages. Learn more at www.ebay.com/shipping.

Customer Service That Sells

Successful sellers on eBay realize the importance of gold-level customer service. This service starts with your listing and continues all the way through the post-sales process. We have all seen the eBay listings that assume guilt—"MUST hear from you in three days. Payment MUST be received in seven days. NEGATIVE feedback WILL BE LEFT!" Customers can't click off those listings fast enough. Instead, offer what your competition does not: a pleasant buying experience.

Don't make your buyers assume anything; tell them what you are willing to do for them. This could include gift wrapping, shipping the gift to Aunt Martha in Oregon, gift notification and faster delivery options. Your customer service should continue through the communications after the purchase. Your buyers had their choice of millions of others sellers, and they chose you. Thank them for buying from you.

"First and foremost, I am a success because my wife and I work hard and long hours, and our customers are our most important business asset," says PowerSeller Bob Lippman, 61, who owns Lippman Enterprises in Palenville, New York (eBay Store: http://stores.ebay.com/lippman-enterprises-ltd). "If you take care of your customers, they will take care of you."

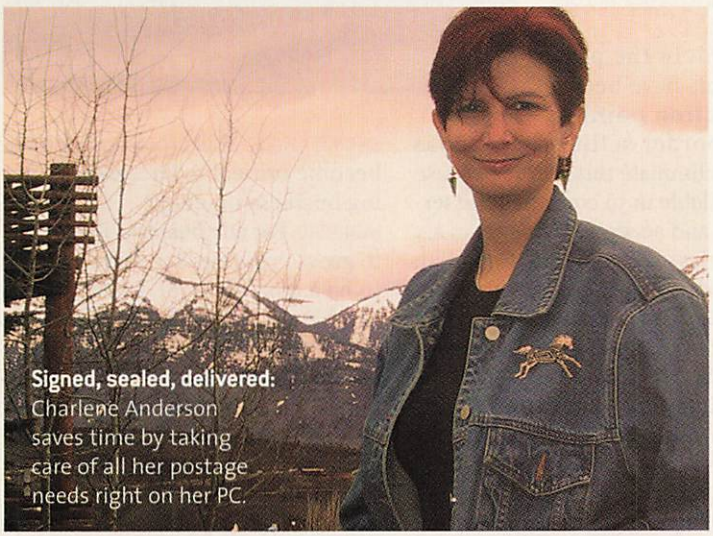
Staying on Top

"What really helped me take my business to the next level are the continuing education classes. I originally went to eBay University [www.ebay.com/university] and learned a ton," explains Tom Hergert, a 25-year-old PowerSeller and owner of Bellevue, Washington-based Tallzag Auctions (http://stores.ebay.com/tallzag-auctions-mopar-disc-brake). "eBay is an ever-changing environment, and if you lock yourself up and keep your same habits every time, you will fall behind your competition."

eBay University tours the United States with experts who teach eBay sellers how to sell more effectively with classes on photography, selling tools, eBay Stores and more. Sellers can also take classes online in the comfort of their own home.

PowerSeller Carol Hearn (eBay Store: http://stores.ebay.com/antiques-at-wandering-creek) believes applying common sense to Hearn Estate Jewelry and Collectibles, her Bothell, Washington-based business, is the most important factor in keeping it on track and growing. "If you believe everything you hear and try every product you find in the marketplace, you'll never get your merchandise sold. A certain amount of focus is an absolute requirement in operating any single-person enterprise, but especially one requiring the amount of time that selling on eBay does," says Hearn, 59.

"The truth is that just about anyone can sell on eBay, but a much smaller percentage have the self-discipline to do so successfully," Hearn explains. "Even though it feels like a game at times, it's a serious business." ■



Signed, sealed, delivered: Charlene Anderson saves time by taking care of all her postage needs right on her PC.

PHOTO COURTESY: CHARLENE ANDERSON

JANELLE ELMS *is a PowerSeller, bestselling author and eBay University instructor. Reach her at www.janelleelms.com.*

Crossing Borders

TIM KUNIHIRO, EBAY DIRECTOR OF CROSS-BORDER TRADE, TELLS HOW TO GO GLOBAL WITH YOUR BUSINESS ON EBAY.

BY SARA WILSON

ENTREPRENEUR: What is cross-border trade?
KUNIHIRO: It's when a sale occurs between a buyer and a seller who are located in different countries.

ENTREPRENEUR: What cross-border trade issues should eBay sellers know about?
KUNIHIRO: The most important ones are understanding the rates for shipping internationally and understanding the customs process. There are some taxes or duties that might apply to certain items. Many sellers make sure the buyers are aware that it's their responsibility to find out if a tax or duty applies.

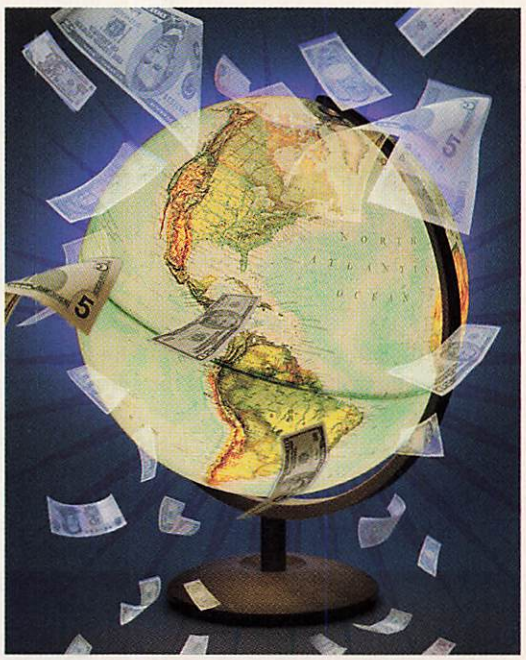
ENTREPRENEUR: Is the timing right for those going international?
KUNIHIRO: Right now is a great time to consider going international because of two factors: One is the large number of buyers on eBay who are located outside the United States. There are eBay sites in 33 countries, and PayPal has localized sites in 13 markets, which makes it easy for buyers and sellers from different parts of the world to transact internationally. The second is the value of the U.S. dollar right now. It is at a historical low vs. other currencies, so there are buyers from other countries who are aggressively looking for U.S. products.

ENTREPRENEUR: What keeps sellers from embracing cross-border trade?
KUNIHIRO: People don't become active in cross-border trade for two reasons. One is that they aren't familiar with the processes involved in cross-border trade, so they don't take action because they don't know how to do it. The other is a fear of foreign buyers. The interesting thing is that those sellers who are active in cross-border trade say that foreign buyers are some of the best buyers they have.

But for new sellers, there is a lack of trust. I would say to them: "Be as open and communicative as possible. Provide as much information as you can, and use common sense if it doesn't feel right." For someone who's new, I would recommend that they open up at least to Canada and the United Kingdom. On eBay, over half of Canadian buyers [purchase] their items from U.S. sellers, so Canada is a big market that you can have access to, and it isn't as foreign as shipping overseas.

ENTREPRENEUR: What about making payments internationally? Is that a barrier to cross-border selling?
KUNIHIRO: In the past, payments have been a big friction point in cross-border selling. PayPal has helped eliminate this hurdle because it is available in 56 countries and territories and accepts payments in six currencies—U.S. dollars, Canadian dollars, euros, pounds sterling, Japanese yen and Australian dollars. When compared to paper-based payment methods, which are currently the most widely used international payment method, PayPal provides a far safer and exceptionally more convenient experience. It can take an average of 10 days to send an international money order, and you need to include your bank account information. With PayPal, you can safely send and receive money internationally almost instantly.

ENTREPRENEUR: Where can people get advice on starting cross-border trade?
KUNIHIRO: We just launched a new page that is a resource for that: www.ebay.com/globaltrade. There are general tools and links to our international community, where you can ask questions. There's also an international trading discussion board on eBay.



ENTREPRENEUR: Will cross-border trade become critical to successfully doing business on eBay?
KUNIHIRO: For any business that wants to grow, cross-border trade is going to be a core element. I hear sellers say that once they discovered cross-border trade, their overall sales picked up due to the added international purchases. I also hear sellers say that they received a lot of bidding activity from users outside the U.S., but still ended up with a domestic transaction at a higher price. ■

ILLUSTRATION: VANDANA DEVIREDDY

Entrepreneur's eBay Startup Guide

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

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What do I sell.com
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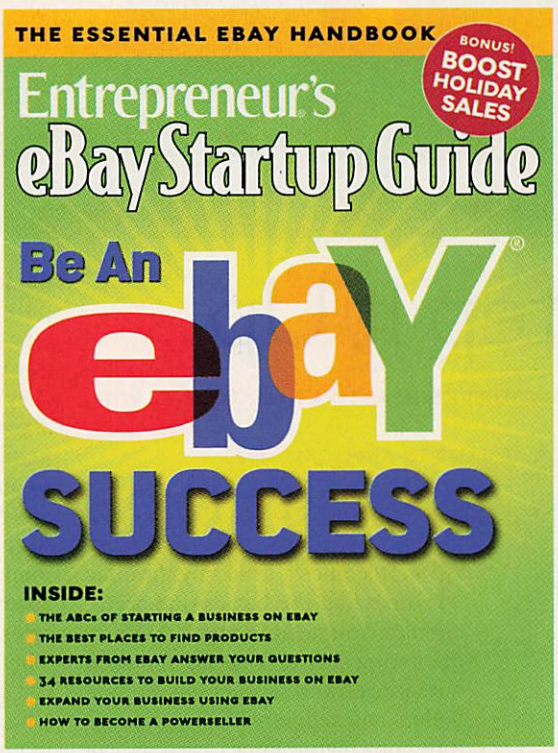
www.whatdoisell.com



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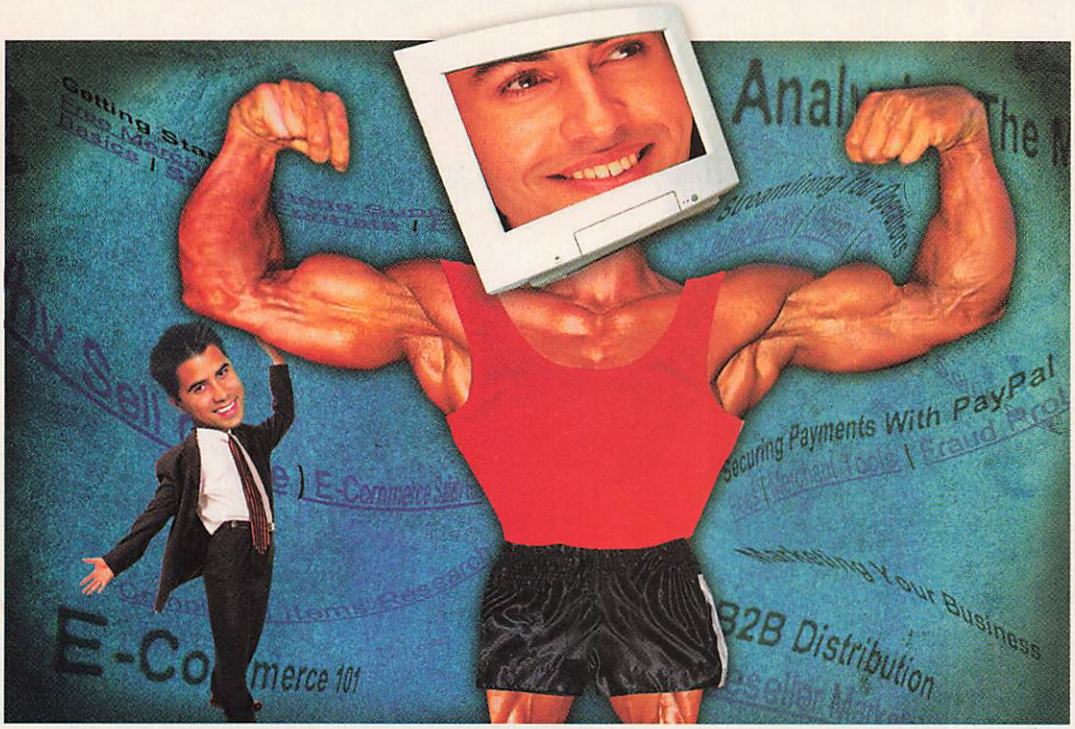

Step It Up

TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO A HIGHER LEVEL WITH THESE ADVANCED APPLICATIONS.

BY AMANDA C. KOOSER

There comes a time in your eBay life when the basics just aren't enough. You need to move on up in the listing software world and seek out more powerful programs. PowerSellers and sellers with large inventories or a high volume of listings can turn to more advanced applications like Infopia and eBay's Selling Manager Pro. There are tons of vendors out there, so feel free to compare and contrast services and costs.

All in all, the following are some very powerful programs that are designed to take your business to the next level. Some can even integrate with and boost your overall e-commerce plan. Most of these programs are web-based, so you don't have to worry about downloading and maintaining lots of software on your computer. At this level, look for strong customer service, and take the opportunity to exercise free trials when they're available.

❖ **EBAY'S SELLING MANAGER PRO (HTTP://PAGES.EBAY.COM/SELLING_MANAGER/PRODUCTS.HTML):** This application ups the ante from the basic edition of the program. You get inventory management, listing statistics, an automated feedback tool, monthly sales reports and a listing designer. The bulk and automation features can save you time and help you keep a handle on everything from sending invoices to dealing with unpaid items. Since it comes directly from eBay, you can expect tight integration with the site. The cost is a very affordable $15.99 per month.

❖ **INFOPIA (WWW.INFOPIA.COM):** For small and midsize businesses, this program offers a comprehensive e-commerce solution with tight eBay integration. Some of the innovative features available include order customization and trade-in capabilities. Infopia's service is one of the priciest, but also the most comprehensive, as it can extend beyond eBay to other facets of your business. Starting at about $5,000, it includes full-service installation and a comprehensive online marketing program. When you're looking to take your e-commerce business to the next level, this sort of solution is worth checking into.

❖ **ZOOVY AUCTION SELLER EDITION (WWW.ZOOVY.COM):** This application comes with quite a few automated capabilities, including eBay checkout, Powerlisting, PayPal integration, and order status e-mails and tracking numbers. It also throws in a bulk listing service, counters and customizable templates for good measure. The image-hosting component comes with handy editing and resizing tools. Integration with FedEx, UPS and the U.S. Postal Service can help take the headaches out of shipping and get your packages out the door faster. You can take Zoovy for a free two-week test drive to try it out, after which it costs $49.95 per month.

❖ **CHANNELADVISOR PRO (WWW.CHANNELADVISOR.COM):** This program has some serious features for serious sellers. Think inventory tracking and management, professional templates, image hosting and customization tools. You can edit multiple listings and schedule listings for posting whenever you want. The extensive invoice management tools are time-savers. It starts at $29.95 per month, or you can get a discount if you sign up for a whole year. The Pro package is designed for individual sellers and small businesses. If your growing business has outstripped that category, look into the Merchant edition for more advanced marketplace management features. ■

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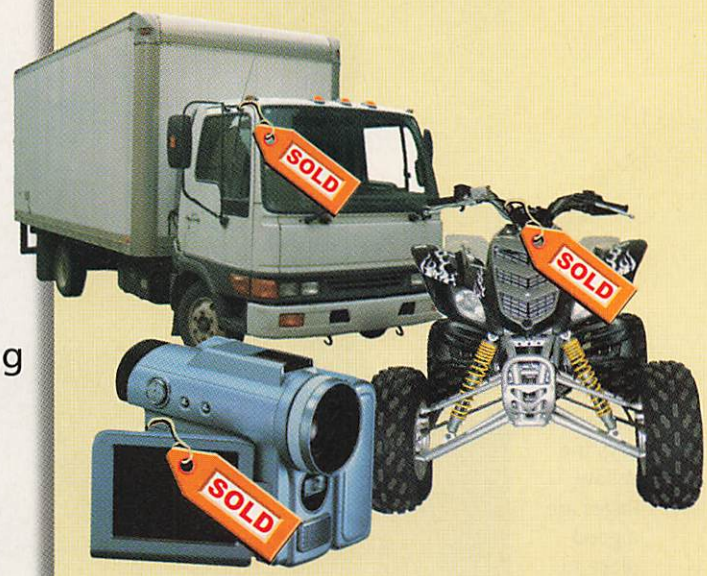

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Straight to the Source

ARE YOU A PRODUCT-SOURCING PRO IN NEED OF NEW IDEAS? CHECK THESE OPTIONS OUT.

BY JULIE MONAHAN

When your business has outgrown job lots, retailer overstock and liquidated merchandise, where do you go to find factory-fresh products with broader customer appeal?

Trade shows, wholesale merchandise marts, drop-shippers, manufacturers and manufacturers' reps are the links between eBay sellers and the goods that raise established businesses to the level of virtual retailer. While these sources will raise your out-of-pocket expenses, you gain access to a greater variety of products that help you stand out in a fiercely competitive market.

At first glance, drop-shipping seems like the easiest approach. Drop-shippers do the wholesale shopping themselves, store the goods and ship them at your request to your customers. Some even provide the product descriptions and photos for your eBay listings. But the service is expensive and may leave you with little, if any, profit after the sale.

You might get a better deal when the drop-shipper is also the manufacturer. "There are thousands of manufacturers who will drop-ship for you," says Skip McGrath, an eBay collectibles dealer in Anacortes, Washington, who self-publishes books and e-newsletters from his website (www.skipmcgrath.com). McGrath suggests starting your search for these manufacturers using business databases such as the Thomas Register Directory. Thomas' listing of U.S. companies is available online at www.thomasnet.com.

If you don't find a drop-shipping manufacturer, it's better to avoid this method of supplying your business on eBay. "There's not enough profit margin," says Marsha Collier, author of *eBay Business All-in-One Desk Reference for Dummies*. Instead, consider making these suppliers just one part of your sourcing strategy. For instance, if a customer asks for something related to your product line that you don't carry, a drop-shipper offers a convenient option. This helps keep your customers happy and enhances the flexibility of your business.

Traveling to trade shows and wholesale merchandise marts also cuts into your profits, but the payoff in new contacts with manufacturers and wholesalers makes them well worth it. If traveling is out of the question, Collier suggests checking your local Yellow Pages for listings of wholesale and retail sources for the types of products you want to sell.

Some eBay sellers eliminate middlemen like wholesalers and drop-shippers and buy directly from the manufacturers. The fact that many manufacturers are overseas can make this difficult for businesses on a budget, but a few resources have cropped up to close the gap between continents. These include www.globalsources.com and www.importexporthelp.com, each of which links U.S. buyers with manufacturers in East Asia.

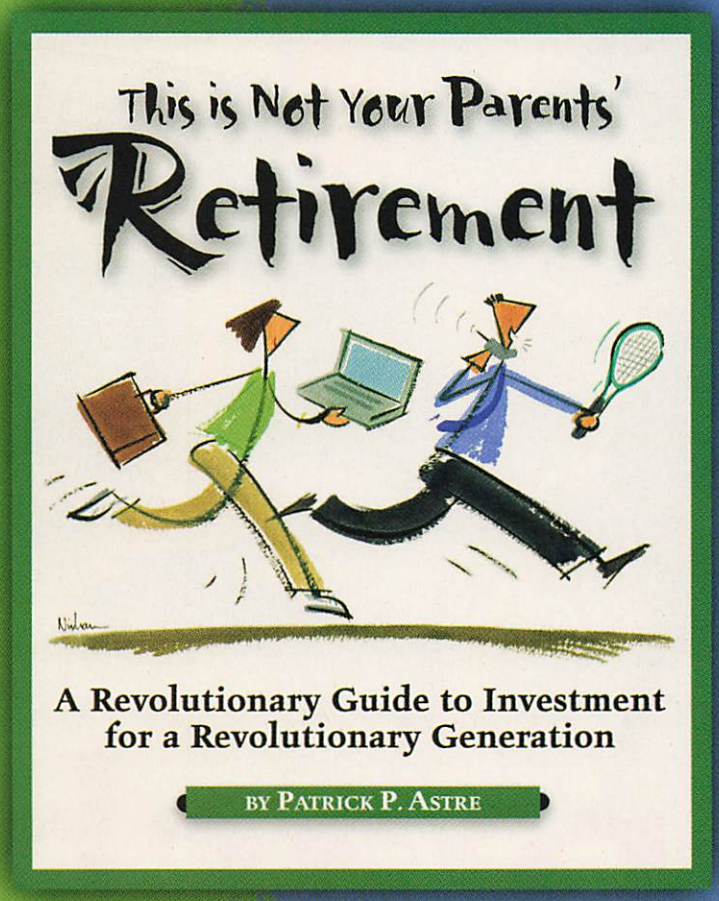
Before taking this step, though, you'll probably need a little cross-cultural training. "Get a sense of the business etiquette," says Sun W. Kim, 30, founder of TekGems Inc. (eBay User ID: TekGems) in San Francisco. "You'll have a much smoother relationship." ■

Word to the wise: Marsha Collier says the Yellow Pages are a good place to start your search for wholesale and retail sources.

PHOTO COURTESY: MARSHA COLLIER

The world has changed

Shouldn't Your Retirement Strategy Follow Suit?


This is Not Your Parents'
Retirement
A Revolutionary Guide to Investment for a Revolutionary Generation
BY PATRICK P. ASTRE

You're destined for a longer, more active retirement than any generation before you–and you want the cash to do it in style. Forget nest eggs. There's a revolution afoot in retirement planning, and expert Patrick Astre divulges the investment secrets that create multiple income streams for life.

"This is absolutely a must-have book for anyone reaching for financial independence."
-Lynn Parrott, vice president
John Hancock/Manulife Financial

"This is one of the best financial books I have read. It's clear, easy to understand and a great guide for anyone who wants to build and preserve wealth toward retirement."
-Arnie Pechler, vice president,
Farmers & Traders Life

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EXTEND your reach

Ready to expand? Turn to eBay to ramp up your sales—no matter what kind of business you own. BY GWEN MORAN

Buyers of pricey Los Angeles Dodgers collectibles don't exactly line up at your door when your music, comics and memorabilia shop is located in Joplin, Missouri. So when Rodney Spriggs finds that one of his 10 Vintage Stock (www.vintagestock.com) stores in the Midwest has slow-moving merchandise, he lists those items on eBay to reach a bigger audience.

"eBay gives us a great outlet for higher-dollar items or items that might not sell in the Midwest," explains Spriggs, 38, who co-owns the company with partners Steve Wilcox, 39, and Ken Caviness, 49. "Five-hundred-dollar Star Wars items might just sit in the store, but when we put them on eBay, we reach a whole new audience."

Sales on eBay make up approximately 3 percent of the company's $7 million in annual revenue. Spriggs expects the percentage to jump in 2006,

Strong start: Keith Chrapliwy (l.) and Andrew Cape built a solid reputation for their sleek furniture on eBay.

when Vintage Stock plans to open an eBay Store instead of running individual listings from each of the company's locations.

While brick-and-mortar retailers may not immediately think of eBay as a viable selling option, Janelle Elms thinks every retailer should have an eBay presence as a way to unload inventory, beef up sales and even drive traffic into local store locations. Elms, coauthor of *eBay Your Business: Maximize Profits and Get Results*, lives in Kirkland, Washington, and teaches courses on eBay selling, in addition to consulting with businesses to maximize their profits on eBay.

"I've worked with hundreds of businesses, and I've yet to find a product or service that doesn't work on eBay," says Elms. "For a very low cost, you can get your name out there, brand your business and reach an audience that you never dreamed of with a small retail business."

Tools You Can Use

Retailers can choose to run individual listings to get started, or invest in an eBay Store, which creates a common area on eBay where retailers can display all their eBay items, says Elms. The virtual storefronts are available at different levels, each with a variety of services, and range in price from $15.95 to $499.95 per month. Entry-level packages include five pages of customizable space, sales tracking capabilities and other features, as well as access to customer support. Top-tier subscriptions for high-volume sellers feature 15 pages of space and all the features of the lower-level subscriptions, as well as 24-hour access to customer support.

The eBay Certified Provider Program promotes access to a network of technical and nontechnical service providers who are carefully screened by eBay. These companies offer services to help eBay sellers ramp up their volume. Nontechnical providers can be hired to help with sales strategy, product sourcing and creative strategy, while technical providers offer services such as custom software development and integration of an existing e-commerce effort with the eBay platform. Certified Providers have extensive experience serving the eBay community, pass certification exams and provide customer references, which are checked by eBay.

Of course, the eBay site has many basic tips and tools for those who want to get started or launch more successful listings. You can start at the Learning Center (http://pages.ebay.com/education), which offers everything from basic selling techniques to links to starting a business for the advanced seller. And like most other business functions, listings can be outsourced. eBay also offers access to Trading Assistants (http://pages.ebay.com/ta), experienced eBay sellers who will sell your items on your behalf for a fee.

In addition, eBay has trained an army of instructors as Education Specialists to help you get started selling. To find one in your area, check the Education Specialist Directory (http://pages.ebay.com/esp).

Making the Most of It

Regardless of your approach to getting started on eBay, Elms suggests creating a strategy and selection of products from the beginning. She advises new sellers to think inventory. "Some people just sell one or two items," Elms says. "You'd never open a brick-and-mortar store with just two items. [Customers would] treat it as a garage sale instead of a business."

And it can be big business. Sales were down and the future looked dismal for Atlanta restaurant equipment retailer A City Discount (www.acitydiscount.com), and owner John Stack was about to close the doors. Around the same time, Stack found 250 coffee pots in a stash of used restaurant equipment he had purchased for resale. Stack knew he couldn't sell them in his store. Then, one of his employees suggested putting them on eBay.

"To my surprise, it worked," recalls Stack. "They ended up selling for over $150 each—more than we could get in the local market. That opened my eyes to the potential of eBay."

That was in September 1999. Today, A City Discount does more than $10 million per year, selling 25,000 pieces of new and used restaurant equipment on eBay—which accounts for nearly half of the company's volume—as well as through its own website and retail location. Most surprising, says Stack, 54, is the synergy

MORE THAN JUST AUCTIONS

Want to complement your retail store with a complete e-commerce suite? eBay has the answer. In June, the company launched ProStores, a turnkey e-commerce solution for retailers who wish to sell online.

ProStores creates online stores that are separate from eBay.com. So, while eBay Stores are collections of a seller's current listings on eBay and have eBay's logo on each page, ProStores is all about you and your business. The fully customizable product uses your own domain and is easy to tailor to the look and feel of your business, says Chris Tsakalakis, senior director of eBay Stores.

ProStores is still compatible with eBay, and it allows you to easily create and list auction-formatted or fixed-price products directly onto eBay.com. ProStores is also compatible with PayPal, allowing retailers to accept credit cards without having to apply for their own merchant accounts.

"This is more than just a website," says Tsakalakis. "You get a shopping cart, a product catalog and full customization capabilities. It's a solution for retailers who want to get started selling online, but who want to keep their costs down."

Of course, ProStores users don't have the traffic of eBay's 147 million registered users. ProStores sellers must drive their own site traffic. For retailers interested in getting started online, ProStores offers a single-source option to get an online store up and running for an affordable monthly fee.

We see you: Ken Caviness, Steve Wilcox and Rodney Spriggs (l. to r.) used eBay to expand sales beyond their Midwestern stores.

Photo Courtesy: Vintage Stock

between eBay and the retailer's other channels. His eBay listings have driven traffic to his website, and customers have phoned from around the country to find out if he has a specific piece of equipment. A City Discount now has more customers in California than it does in its home state of Georgia.

Spriggs agrees that eBay is a powerful marketing tool. Vintage Stock puts tags on in-store items that are also being offered on eBay, so if a customer is unsure about an item, he or she can take some time to decide and then log onto the item listing to purchase it.

"If you already have a brick-and-mortar store, why wouldn't you be on eBay anyway?" asks Debra Schepp, author of *eBay PowerSeller Secrets: Insider Tips From eBay's Most Successful Sellers.* "You already have sources for your products. You already know your product line. You are already experienced in customer service. So selling on eBay can't do anything but put your business into a global marketplace with millions of potential customers."

Some brick-and-mortar stores actually have their beginnings on eBay. Keith Chrapliwy, 31, and Andrew Cape, 30, were both graphic designers and started selling furniture on eBay as a hobby. For six years, the two maintained a friendly rivalry in their listings. Then it became clear that their pastime could sustain them as a business. In 2003, they both quit their corporate jobs and opened Modology, a modern furniture store in Cincinnati. In less than two years, the company's revenue has grown to almost $300,000—85 percent of which is still sold through eBay—and continues to climb.

"We wouldn't have survived if it wasn't for eBay because of the high-end furniture that we sell," says Chrapliwy. "It's given us an international platform to sell our stuff." Because of the sheer volume of users, eBay can also build exposure and drive customers from other locales into a retail location. Some of Stack's local customers have found his store because of his eBay presence. And Chrapliwy recalls one couple who traveled from Idaho to his store. Based on their volume of listings on eBay and the reputation that Modology has built, the couple commented that they had expected to find a much larger retail store than the company's 2,000-square-foot location.

Setting Up Shop

Setting up a proper store on eBay requires some search engine marketing savvy, says Elms, since eBay Stores often show up in searches done on Google, Yahoo! and other online search engines. Each eBay Store has a title, which, she advises, should include words that describe your business in 35 characters or less. Using keywords related to what you sell in your Store title will yield a higher ranking in search results. For example, Elms' eBay Store name, Auction Profit Education Consulting, has resulted in 41 percent of her traffic coming from Google, which ranks her within the top five results of a search for "eBay consultant."

Schepp adds that retailers should make every effort to keep their feedback scores—the comments from buyers that indicate whether their experience was positive or negative—high. Positive feedback is the backbone of a successful eBay enterprise.

"Serious sellers guard their eBay feedback more closely than their inventories," she says. "If your feedback rating is 97 [percent positive feedback] or less, you are suspect on eBay."

Schepp says that the best way to maintain positive feedback is to give truthful descriptions of products, use clear pictures, and keep buyers apprised of the selling process, shipping fees and status of their auction at all times. Stack found that adding a freight calculator to his website, accessible from his eBay listings, was a popular feature with customers, who could then avoid sticker shock when learning the fees for shipping his large equipment.

Schepp adds that eBay can be a valuable part of a trade-in program. "Offer your current customers trade-ins on their used products, and sell those items on eBay," she advises. "That way, you turn every sale into three sales."

With ample tools and resources to get retailers started in e-commerce, eBay offers a turnkey solution for taking part in a $34 billion marketplace. That's something few independent retailers can do on their own.

"I think at a certain point, you have to look at every possible opportunity," says Spriggs. "Look at just the sheer number of eyes you get on eBay. They're definitely the dominant force. They're definitely where you go. You'd be hard-pressed to find someone who hasn't heard of eBay." ■

GWEN MORAN *is a writer and consultant specializing in marketing. Reach her at gwen@gwenmoran.com.*

PERFECT

BY MARK HENRICKS

ZERO IN ON YOUR CATEGORY, AND LEARN EXPERT TECHNIQUES TO MAKE YOUR SALES SING.

What's good for the goose isn't good for the gander—on eBay, that is. The strategies, tools, resources and techniques employed by experienced eBay sellers vary significantly depending on the items being sold. Sure, there are some basic techniques that eBay sellers in all categories should follow, such as optimizing listing titles and writing informative item descriptions complete with lots of pictures.

But in a marketplace with tens of millions of different items, clearly you can't treat them all the same. Even when you divide items into broad categories with similar characteristics, experienced sellers know that each listing requires its own special touches.

Seasoned sellers use different techniques to sell items with low and high average selling prices (ASPs), items that sell in bulk, big items, collectibles and, in a special category, automobiles. Here are some insider tips from eBay category experts about how to best sell items in each of those categories.

Low-ASP Items

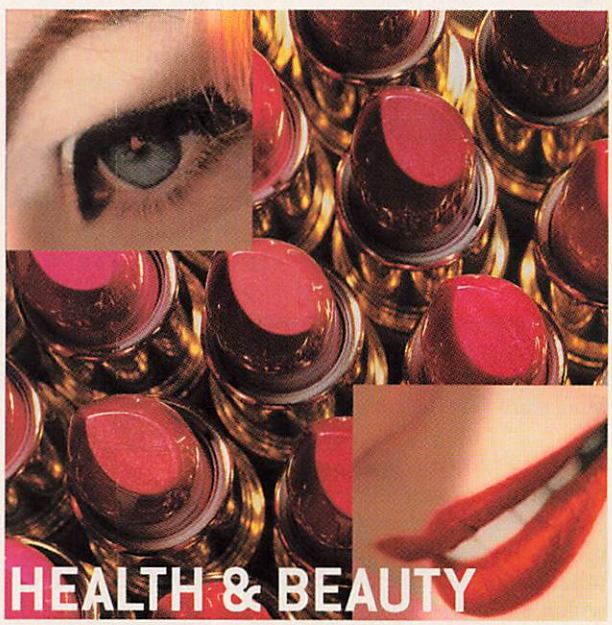
Low average selling price doesn't mean low opportunity. Health & Beauty, one of the fastest-growing categories on eBay, with $196 million in products sold in the U.S. in 2004, features items from antiperspirants to weight-loss patches that sell for a few dollars each. Other items with low ASPs include books, movies and DVDs.

If you want to run with the best low-ASP sellers, cater to the mind-set of low-ASP purchasers. For example, Anna Fieler, senior category manager for Health & Beauty, says, "You may want to use Buy It Now for many of these items. Given the low price point and impulse-driven nature of some beauty purchases, Buy It Now may increase the velocity of your sales and provide a better buyer experience."

Focus strongly on offering value when selling low-ASP items. Clearly show buyers how much their eBay purchase price saves them compared to retail prices. To deliver still more value, consider low-cost or free shipping options, because shipping may represent a large percentage of the purchase price for low-ASP items.

Don't neglect to take advantage of techniques for controlling your own costs—especially critical with low-ASP items. For instance, many people stock lower-priced items in eBay Stores to take advantage of Stores' relatively low listing fees. "Utilize eBay Stores for low-ASP products that may be slower-moving," says Andrew Lee, senior category manager for DVDs & Movies. Sellers can also use their core listings to drive traffic to their eBay Stores in a coordinated selling strategy that optimizes inventory turn, he adds.

After you've gotten costs under control, consider ways to increase your revenue. For example, you may be able



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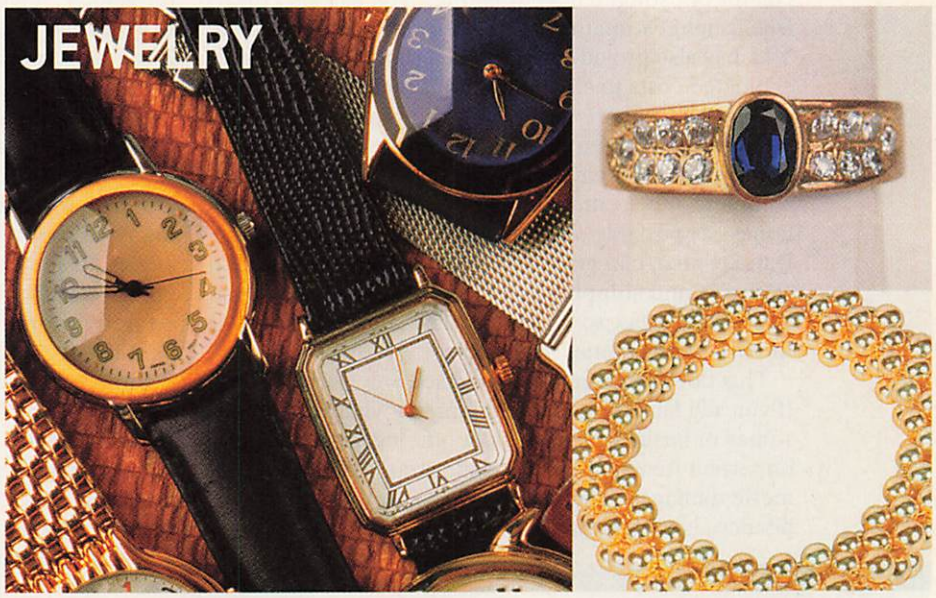
PITCH

to build your average transaction amount if you find ways to bundle low-ASP products together. With consumable items such as health and beauty aids, develop a replenishment strategy to keep satisfied customers ordering regularly. Lee recommends you cross-merchandise by offering DVDs to people who are purchasing players. You'll find a guide to cross promotion at http://pages.ebay.com/sell/crosspromotionstutorial.



High-ASP Items

Items with a high average selling price include computers, TVs and other electronics, cameras and jewelry. When you're selling high-priced items, it's essential to know the key objective metrics by which buyers will evaluate your items. With heavy equipment, such as lawn mowers, for instance, one key metric is the number of hours the machine has been used, notes Steve Cohen, category manager for Home Improvement.

In addition to knowing metrics, high-ASP-item buyers may need objective proof that your description of an item is accurate. When it comes to diamonds, for example, proof will consist of a certificate issued by a gem-grading laboratory, says Amy Norman, category manager for Watches & Designer Jewelry.

Don't stop there. Also consider offering buyers purchase protection, such as PayPal Buyer Protection, which gives $1,000 of coverage at no additional cost on qualified purchases paid for through PayPal. "We recommend offering PayPal Buyer Protection," Cohen says.

Pricing is equally important with high-ASP items. Use the "Completed Listings Only" option in the Search tool to learn results of similar sales. Consider using a low starting bid price along with a reserve to protect your selling price, suggests Ben Hanna, senior manager of Business & Industrial.

You may want to list high-ASP items in multiple categories when appropriate. This can expose your item to a broader selection of customers. High-ASP-item sellers should also consider using eBay's buyer management tools, Cohen says. These allow sellers to block certain types of bidders from participating in a specific transaction.

Finally, make it easy for your buyers to pay for their high-ASP purchases. Highlight any payment and financing options you may offer, and be clear about deposit requirements and other terms. "Sellers can also offer equipment financing on items over $2,000 through Direct Capital [http://financing-center.ebay.com/ebaybusiness] and receive a refund of their eBay Final Value Fees if the item is financed," Hanna notes.

For items less than $2,000 and greater than $200, sellers can offer promotional financing options, such as deferred-interest payments, through PayPal Buyer Credit. Offering promotional financing makes items more affordable for buyers by allowing them to make low monthly payments or to defer interest payments.

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Big Items

Big items, such as furniture and industrial equipment, present their own issues and opportunities for advanced sellers. Often, they require financing options, special shipping, insurance, buyer assurance and other unusual handling.

Shipping is especially important when dealing with big items. Buyers of bulky items are most interested in knowing the total cost of the item delivered to their door and will typically ask questions about shipping costs before bidding, says Hanna. Include a Freight Shipping Calculator or estimate in your listings. You can also find a free freight estimator at http://ebay.freightquote.com. You may also provide an estimated cost per mile or give estimated costs to ship to different regions.

Whether you are describing shipping costs, return policies, buyer assurance or other issues of special importance to big-item buyers, take extra care to achieve complete and accurate disclosure. "Be as accurate and honest as possible about product condition," stresses Dan Serpico, category manager for Home & Garden. "Returns and shipping can be quite difficult, more so than other areas, so you want to be sure to get it right the first time whenever possible."

That doesn't mean you should sell only perfect items. If you sell large pieces of equipment, whether for consumer or business use, consider offering used or slightly imperfect items, especially utilitarian items with cosmetic damage. "The sweet spot for selling major appliances is with scratch-and-dent goods," says Serpico, "which are the perfect items for matching a buyer's need for a discount with the seller's need to maximize recovery on a damaged or returned item."

Motors

Motor vehicles are sui generis on eBay—in a category by themselves. There are related categories on eBay Motors, including vehicle parts, but sellers of actual automobiles have some significant tools and resources that advanced car merchants will want to know about.

Given the size, cost and complexity of a typical motor vehicle, full disclosure is critical. "There is nothing to be gained by excluding a problem with the car," says Zak Edson, manager of eBay Motors Marketplace Efficiency. "Buyers appreciate honesty and shy away from anything that looks suspicious."

That doesn't mean you should present the item in its worst light. Clean your vehicle carefully before photographing it. Then be generous with pictures, posting as many as possible and including the views from all angles, inside and outside, including the trunk and engine areas. Consider including a picture of yourself, a family member or pet in one or more photos to give the listing a personal touch.

Be sure to take advantage of the eBay tools designed especially for Motors. Sellers who wish to sell multiple cars, for instance, can use a listing tool called CARad to easily manage multiple vehicle sales. Vehicle reports, available at http://pages.motors.ebay.com/services/vehicle_history_report.html, help you give discriminating buyers a complete record of the car's history. Additionally, you can send or receive deposits for the vehicle through PayPal. PayPal keeps buyers' financial information safe and gives sellers a fast and easy way to receive their deposit.

Research the appropriate price for your vehicle by looking at completed listings and studying market value guides, such as the Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com). Car buyers appreciate sellers who offer flexible terms of sale, adds Edson. He recommends being willing to help the buyer arrange shipping and offering to accept multiple payment options.

Bulk Selling

Wholesale Lots is a growing area of eBay, where many sellers not only dispose of large quantities of goods, but also acquire inventory to sell. Many other eBay categories also offer a selection of goods available in lot quantities. Selling items that typically move in pallets and truckloads calls for a slew of advanced selling techniques and tools. Shipping, storing, payment

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terms and dealing with damaged goods are all important for sellers of bulk items.

Many of the same shipping solutions that help sellers of big items will also apply here. You can save yourself time and money by using the Freight Resource Center (http://ebay.freightquote.com) to get a freight quote for shipping your lot. Or call (888) 875-7822 to talk live with a customer-service representative about shipping your item via freight.

Too complicated? Even if you don't want to ship bulky items yourself, you can still sell them on eBay, notes Jeannie Reeth, senior category manager for Home & Garden. "Simply specify your location, and let buyers know you require them to pick up the item at your home, or let buyers know you're willing to deliver it within a certain mile radius."

Sellers who are offering liquidation items in lot sizes typically offer their goods "as is." As a result, buyers may be more willing to accept the fact that some of the products may be damaged. It is essential, however, that you specify this or other conditions of sale in your item description and policies. If you have more liberal policies, consider obtaining shipping insurance to cover yourself if damages do occur.

Because many buyers of lots will be businesses, you'll be faced with the need to adopt additional payment options. Net 30 days, net 60 days, PayPal Buyer Credit or the use of letters of credit are all terms you should consider offering buyers of lot items.

Collectibles

Collectibles is the category with the longest history on eBay, and antiques, stamps, art and other collectibles remain among the most popular products sold on eBay. The key characteristics of collectibles buyers are their love of and knowledge about the items they are shopping for. Even if you lack similar enthusiasm for those products, you still must be able to match the buyer's knowledge.

Jennifer Ibarra, associate category manager for Art & Antiques, advises collectibles sellers to research their market and items thoroughly. Kathryn Kane, associate category manager for Pottery & Glass, elaborates: "Research is incredibly important in this area, as there are diehard collectors who are passionate about their pottery and glass and will often know more than the sellers!"

Authenticity is a critical component of success for experienced sellers of collectibles. This is a combination of knowing what you are talking about and being able to prove it. "Research the history of the artwork and the artist, and provide documentation for authentic or attributed artwork," Ibarra says.

For art, authentication may consist of references to published catalogs. Coin and stamp sellers may obtain certification from reputable grading agencies. If you have a stamp you want to sell and aren't sure what it is, consider using the American Philatelic Society's Quick ID service, offered through a link on eBay's "Stamps" page. It's an inexpensive alternative to official certification.

Sellers in one area of collectibles have recently begun employing a new wrinkle on providing photos of items offered for sale, says Lia Theologides Mukhar, senior category manager for Coins & Stamps. "Now some people are using videos in their listings," she says. "That's the hottest thing in Coins."

By providing videos of themselves displaying coins offered for sale, sellers give shoppers a chance to appreciate the luster of high-quality collectible coins by rotating coins back and forth. Plus, the video gives the listing a more personal stamp. If you don't go for the video, consider using a flatbed scanner to capture coins, suggests Theologides Mukhar, as it provides a clear image without the glare of a camera flash.

Finally, take advantage of collectibles buyers' passion by engaging and keeping their interest. You can turn occasional shoppers into long-term repeat customers by using the e-mail marketing tools available through eBay Stores, suggests Ibarra. "This is a great tool to promote your Store to your customers, allowing you to send newsletters, which keep customers updated on new listings on the site." ■

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Tools of the Trade

BY MARSHA COLLIER

WITH SO MANY TOOLS AVAILABLE TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS ON EBAY, IT'S TOUGH TO TELL WHICH ONES REALLY HELP YOU PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL. HERE'S OUR LIST OF MUST-HAVES.

With a dizzying array of software and services for eBay sellers, successful sellers are barraged with offers for services to "improve" business. eBay and plenty of third-party providers are continuously developing tools to make a seller's life easier—and for the most part, many do. The problem is taking the time to separate the good from the bad.

Making a snap decision when choosing a sales tool or software from an e-mail can be foolhardy, and listening to a telemarketer or trade-show salesperson's pitch and signing up for service without thorough investigation can be disastrous. The bottom line: Take it slow, and start small.

For the budding eBay business mogul, eBay and PayPal have developed a large selection of good, solid business tools. Using them is a safe bet, and because they're from eBay, they immediately adapt to any changes in the eBay system.

My first piece of advice: Be sure you don't subscribe to more services than you can keep track of or spend so much money on products that you price yourself out of a profit.

I have tried eBay's tools and many others for my business and recommend you take advantage of some of these helpful offerings. They're designed for eBay "businesses"—meaning, if you're listing more than 50 items a month, you may need the help these tools provide. Read on to get a taste of some of your choices.

You may notice that many of the tools below come free when you have a basic eBay Store. If you're running a business on eBay, you *should* have a Store. At the low price of $15.95 per month, it's definitely well worth the cost, considering the many bonuses eBay throws into the subscription.

Turbo Lister

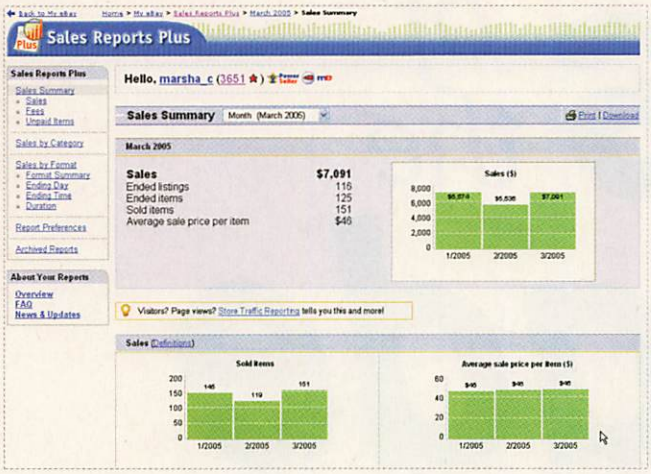
If you don't have a high-speed, always-on internet connection, you should be using Turbo Lister to upload your listings to eBay. Even if you do have a high-speed connection, Turbo Lister can save you time by giving you a place to prepare listings at your leisure and upload them all at once. Best of all, Turbo Lister is free.

Turbo Lister is downloadable software for use on a PC (sorry, it's not available for Macs at this time). It combines all the features of the What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editor-based "Sell Your Item" form in one convenient program. Here are a few special features you won't find anywhere else:

- **ARCHIVE YOUR LISTINGS:** Turbo Lister saves your listings in one convenient program, so you can reuse them or retrieve a particular template.
- **BULK EDITING:** By selecting listings (highlighting with a mouse click) in the program, you can make changes to item specifics or selling formats.
- **INVENTORY:** Organize your listings in folders, and save them for future use. Duplicate and copy them to make multiple listings based on your inventory for uploading.

Selling Manager

When it comes to automating and organizing a business on eBay, eBay's $4.99 per month subscription to Selling Manager certainly fits the bill. (Selling Manager is free if you have a basic eBay Store.) Selling Manager replaces the "My Selling" tab of your "My eBay" page, making it extra handy for those who run their businesses on eBay with a Mac. You can run



the program directly on the eBay site, because it's not platform dependent.

With eBay's Selling Manager, you can view the status of all your listings at a glance using the "Summary" page or the individual status columns. For example, when an item is listed, it is in the "Active Items" area; once it is sold (but not paid for), it moves to the "Sold: Awaiting Payment" page. After the buyer pays with PayPal, the listing moves to the "Sold: Awaiting Shipment" page. One glance at this page at the end of the day, and you'll know how many boxes you need to ship the next day.

Selling Manager also allows you to customize a set of e-mails to send to your customers through eBay's e-mail system. Each transaction is held in its own area, so you can send invoices and e-mails, and make notes about the transaction. All this data can be downloaded for your own records.

There are some bulk functions as well. You can leave feedback for many buyers at once. You can also file Unpaid Item (UPI) reports from a clickable menu—very convenient! You will never forget to file for the Final Value Fee (FVF) Credit, as it shows up on your "Summary" page when eBay's timetable says it's time to file.

Sales Reports Plus

Although all eBay sellers get Sales Reports as part of their "My eBay" page, you can get extended information on your business's metrics for an additional $4.99 per month (or free with your eBay Store) by subscribing to Sales Reports Plus.

Sales Reports Plus defines your business metrics by category, format (Fixed-Price, Store Item, or auction-style listing), ending day, length of listing and ending time. That's a lot of information!

Sales Reports Plus gives you a snapshot of your weekly and monthly sales figures, and provides an analysis of your net eBay and PayPal fees. This lets you see your fees as a percentage of your sales, giving you an idea of what you may be spending to grow your business.

There's also a detailed area that goes over your FVF Credits and Store Referral Credits. Both are excellent barometers of whether your marketing is really working for your listings.

You can download archived reports to your computer for up to two years after they have been generated.

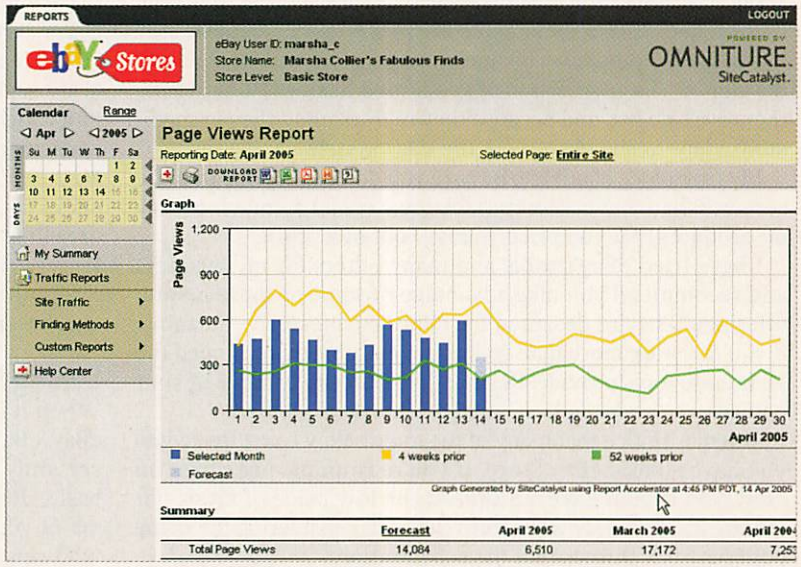
eBay Marketplace

A little-known fact to build your sales: eBay offers its sellers a line of HTML code (called a "sniplet") to insert on a blank internet page or on your own website. Once you place this code on the page, you'll get a full-page listing of your eBay items currently for sale on the site. You can access the sniplet tool at www.ebay.com/api/merchantkit.html. Just agree to the eBay Editor Kit-License Agreement to customize your page. Once you make your customization choices, you'll get your magic sniplet.

You can use the sniplet to insert this page all over the internet—there's no limit to how many times you can use it. Why not put one up on your personal free home page offered by your ISP? Remember that if someone buys from your eBay Store after clicking through a Marketplace link, you will get a 75 percent discount on your Store item's FVF.

Store Traffic Reports

All eBay Store owners get access to basic Traffic Reports, which give you the number of page views, the number of visitors to your Store, and data on unique visitors. One of the more telling features from the report is that you learn how people are finding your eBay Store. Do they come directly from your other eBay listings? From other sites (your Marketplace at work)? From search engines?



If people arrive at your Store through search engines, the Traffic Reports will show you which unique keywords the visitors used to get there. This is handy when you want to put together your Keyword campaign.

If you have an Anchor or Featured eBay Store, you'll get even more data, including path analysis, search terms used within your store, and data on returning visitors. For more information on the data available to Featured and Anchor eBay Stores, visit http://pages.ebay.com/storefronts/traffic-reports.html.

eBay Keywords

Successful businesses on eBay know that a Keyword campaign is an effective way to market your listings on the website. This kind of advertising works best when you specialize in a particular type of product that has a distinct audience.

To attract the searching audience, you need to select keywords that represent the types of items you sell. You then submit the keywords and indicate how much you would be willing to pay when someone clicks on your advertising banner to go to your eBay Store or Store listing (that's why it's called pay-per-click advertising). You'll also see who else is using those keywords to advertise, and you have the option of outbidding your competition for priority placement. The higher you bid, the more often your banner will appear. Your banner will then show up when a search is run on eBay that includes your keywords.

Cross Promotions

One of the best marketing tools eBay offers for Store owners (and one of the easiest to use) is the ability to select items to cross-promote in your listings. Cross promotions appear at the bottom of your listing, showing other items you're selling. As a buyer, I can assure you that cross promotions help increase sales. When I'm buying one thing from a seller and an aptly-placed cross promotion catches my eye, I usually add it to my purchase.

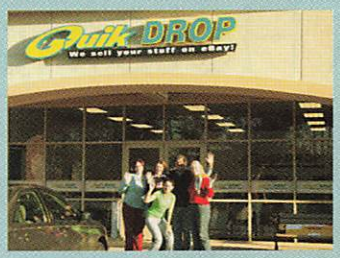
You have control over which items to promote within your listings. In the "Items I'm Selling" area of your "My eBay" page, select the item you want to set up cross promotions for by clicking on the icon in the last column of the listing. (You can also use the links on each item page, but the "My eBay" links are more convenient.) Once you click there, you can manually select which items you wish to promote, or they can be automatically selected based on your criteria.

Third-Party Solutions

Not only can you streamline your business from eBay, you can also find tools to help grow your business from independent companies that make their living helping sellers on eBay.

Most of these independents understand business as well as eBay. Their business experience can add to your bottom line. I try out many of these services as they roll out and write about them for Entrepreneur.com, in my books or on my website. Be sure to check in from time to time for up-to-date information. ■

MARSHA COLLIER *(www.coolebaytools.com) is author of* Starting an eBay Business for Dummies *and* eBay Business All-in-One Desk Reference for Dummies.

Quik DROP
We sell your stuff on eBay!
WOW!
WHAT A GREAT IDEA!

Entrepreneur magazine picked eBay drop-off stores as one of the hottest businesses to start in 2005.
Millions of people have "Stuff" to sell and we make it easy. We turn their "Stuff" into money and our customers love it.
We're expanding rapidly.
International Master Franchises available.
Great locations available Now!
eBay stores
The Best Software in the industry
Superior Corporate & In-Store Training
24 Hour Franchise Support
Flat Rate Royalty
Local Area Supervision
Exciting Growth Potential
International Trade Ability
Low Franchise & Software License Fees
Total Investment Approximately $70,000
Put This "Great Idea" To Work For You Now!
TradingPost for eBay
This May Be The Best Day of Your Life!
Quik DROP
We sell your stuff on eBay!
Call (714) 429-1040 or Visit
www.QuikDropFranchise.com

A Helping Hand

ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS ON EBAY IS RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

Got a question about something on eBay? The resources on the following pages should help you find the answer.

If there's something you can't find in this crash course, you'll find "Help" at the top of every page on eBay. There are several different ways you can use the Help feature. First, you can check a list of the most frequently asked questions. Alternatively, browse the topics, do a search, or click on "A-Z Index" to easily find answers to your specific question. Learn more at http://pages.ebay.com/help/index.html. *—Mark Henricks*

EBAY LEARNING CENTER

LEARN "HOW TO EBAY" RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

To find audio tours on topics such as "How Does eBay Work?" "How to Register," "How to Sell," "Successful Selling" and more, visit eBay's Learning Center at www.ebay.com/education. You can also access tutorials on a variety of topics. Check in often as you progress.

EBAY RADIO

CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF EBAY? THEN LISTEN IN.

Get all the eBay advice you crave on *eBay Radio* with host Jim "Griff" Griffith. The show features great guests and listener calls. It airs every Tuesday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Pacific time at www.wsradio.com/ebayradio, and is archived for easy listening 24/7.

EBAY UNIVERSITY

CONTINUE YOUR EBAY EDUCATION ONLINE AND IN CLASS.

Anyone can learn to sell on eBay with the help of eBay University. You get two ways to learn: face-to-face classroom sessions or convenient online courses.

eBay University classroom learning puts you face-to-face with expert instructors. You'll get to ask questions and take home a workbook for more study. Plus, you'll get to network with other eBay users. Classes are held regularly across the nation, with prices starting at $59.

Similar courses are also available online or on CD-ROM—which lets you learn at your own pace. The cost for the CD is $19.95 plus shipping. Learn more about eBay University at www.ebay.com/university, or visit the Learning Center. *—M.H.*

BOOKS

READY TO DO SOME RECOMMENDED READING? THESE BOOKS ARE CHOCK-FULL OF HELPFUL TIPS.

THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE TO STARTING AN EBAY BUSINESS (Alpha, www.idiotsguides.com) by Barbara Weltman

EBAY BUSINESS ALL-IN-ONE DESK REFERENCE FOR DUMMIES (Wiley, www.dummies.com or www.wiley.com) by Marsha Collier

EBAY HACKS: TIPS & TOOLS FOR BIDDING, BUYING AND SELLING (O'Reilly, www.oreilly.com) by David A. Karp

THE EBAY MILLIONAIRE: TITANIUM POWERSELLER SECRETS FOR BUILDING A BIG ONLINE BUSINESS (Wiley, www.wiley.com) by Amy Joyner

EBAY PHOTOS THAT SELL: TAKING GREAT PRODUCT SHOTS FOR EBAY AND BEYOND (Sybex Inc., www.sybex.com) by Dan Gookin and Robert Birnbach

EBAY TIMESAVING TECHNIQUES FOR DUMMIES (Wiley, www.dummies.com or www.wiley.com) by Marsha Collier

EBAY YOUR BUSINESS: MAXIMIZE PROFITS AND GET RESULTS (McGraw-Hill, www.osborne.com) by Janelle Elms, Michael Bellomo and Joel Elad

PAYPAL HACKS: 100 INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH TIPS & TOOLS (O'Reilly, www.oreilly.com) by Shannon Sofield, Dave Nielsen and Dave Burchell

THE 7 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL EBAY MARKETING (McGraw-Hill, www.osborne.com) by Janelle Elms, Amy Balsbaugh and Phil Dunn

STARTING AN EBAY BUSINESS FOR DUMMIES, 2ND EDITION (Wiley, www.dummies.com or www.wiley.com) by Marsha Collier

THE LATEST TOOLS

MAKE YOUR BUSINESS BLOOM WITH THESE NEW TOOLS.

eBay continues to improve the end-user experience by introducing tools that enhance and streamline the buying and selling process.

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT: Since the rest of your business most likely runs on QuickBooks, why not your eBay accounting? With Accounting Assistant, you can quickly and effortlessly export your eBay and PayPal transactions into QuickBooks, including eBay and PayPal fees. Accounting Assistant is free to all Stores sellers and subscribers to Selling Manager or eBay Blackthorne products. It also works with QuickBooks Pro, Premier or Enterprise editions 2002, 2003, 2004 or 2005.

BLACKTHORNE: A comprehensive listing- and sales-management tool that helps medium- and high-volume vendors sell more efficiently. Dubbed the next generation of Seller's Assistant, Blackthorne is still in the test phase, and only subscribers to Seller's Assistant are able to download the beta pre-release. Blackthorne offers sellers greater customization through bulk functionality such as lists and feedback, and also lends a hand in e-mail templates, sales tracking, P&L reports and more. Blackthorne comes in two versions: Basic, for those listing 25 to 100 items per month, and Pro, for high-volume sellers listing more than 100 items per month. Basic and Pro versions have monthly flat fees of $9.99 and $24.99, respectively. For more information, visit http://pages.ebay.com/help/sell/blackthorne-faqs.html.

EBAY SALES REPORTS: eBay Sales Reports come in two varieties: Sales Reports and Sales Reports Plus. Basic reports offer information on sales, successful listing percentage, average sales price and eBay and PayPal fees. Plus reports provide more in-depth analysis of the information given in basic reports, including buyer counts, Unpaid Item credits requested, metrics by category and format, download capabilities and more. The basic Sales Reports are free, while the Plus reports are $4.99 per month (but free for eBay Stores).

EBAY WIRELESS: Mobile eBay users with an internet-enabled cell phone or PDA can access eBay without being tethered to a desktop. You can access a mobile version of eBay, sign up for real-time notifications and get other developer solutions aimed toward specific mobile carriers at http://bonfiremedia.com/ebay. If your phone is not Java-enabled, you can access eBay Wireless on your cell phone at http://wap.ebay.com.

FILE EXCHANGE: High-volume sellers can use their current inventory software, such as Microsoft Excel, Access and others, to submit listings to eBay with a single file. File Exchange also permits users to receive sales status information from eBay in the supported file format of their choosing and even creates a file template for users based on the categories they want to list. File Exchange is currently offered free to qualified users.

PICTURE MANAGER: Save time and money by letting eBay host all your pictures for as long as you want. Picture Manager is a subscription service (prices vary depending on storage demand) that allows the seller to upload images in bulk, rename pictures, move pictures to customized folders and view pictures in thumbnail sheets. For security, Picture Manager enables users to watermark their images.

PROMOTIONAL FINANCING THROUGH PAYPAL BUYER CREDIT: Allows sellers of high-priced items to offer buyers financing options such as low monthly payments or deferred-interest payments. Promotional financing makes high-priced items on eBay more affordable for buyers. For more information, visit www.paypal.com/buyercredit.

WANT IT NOW: Want It Now allows buyers to post the items they're seeking. This creates a role reversal where sellers can browse through posts looking for products they provide and responding with items they sell on eBay. Start browsing now at http://pages.ebay.com/wantitnow.

For more information to help sellers, eBay has launched a "Selling Resources" page for all their services at http://pages.ebay.com/sell/resources.html.

—Steve Cooper

SHIPPING SOLUTIONS

ONCE YOU'VE MADE THE SALE, YOUR JOB'S ONLY HALF DONE, SO KNOW YOUR SHIPPING OPTIONS.

When determining shipping costs, sellers can either offer three different flat-rate charges to the buyer (using the Flat Rate tool during the listing process) or they can let the buyer calculate the shipping costs based on ZIP code by including the eBay Shipping Calculator. The Calculator is a free tool that can help sellers attract more business because it gives buyers the comfort of knowing their precise shipping costs. Handling and insurance costs can be factored in, and the Calculator can also compute international rates.

Once the price of shipping has been handled and the item has sold, it's time to ship the item. eBay has teamed with two main shipping providers for regular-size packages: the U.S. Postal Service and UPS. For really heavy items (over 150 pounds), they also offer freight solutions through eBay's Freight Resource Center at http://ebay.freightquote.com, which is powered by Freightquote.com.

Both USPS and UPS offer free label printing through My eBay and PayPal—neither requires any software to download. Other benefits to purchasing shipping labels online are free Delivery Confirmation for Priority Mail and Express Mail packages, and discounted Delivery Confirmation for First Class Mail, Parcel Post and Media Mail packages.

The last process you need to consider is package tracking. Through My eBay, you can track the delivery status for USPS packages, and get detailed tracking information from initial scan to final delivery for UPS packages.

For more shipping information, eBay offers a helpful demo in their Shipping Center located at www.ebay.com/shipping. —*S.C.*

MAKING MORE MONEY

WANT TO INCREASE YOUR INCOME FROM EBAY? TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE SPECIAL PROGRAMS.

1. EDUCATION SPECIALIST PROGRAM: If you like the idea of helping others learn how to be better eBay buyers and sellers—and supplementing your income in the process—then the Education Specialist Program is for you. This self-paced, online training course will show you how to become an independent trainer, teaching others how to buy and sell on eBay. Even if you're already teaching a class, you can make sure you have the best materials—the same curriculum is used at eBay University—and hone your expertise through the Education Specialist Program. Learn more at http://www.ebay.com/esp. —*M.H.*

2. TRADING ASSISTANT PROGRAM: Many small businesses see the potential of selling on eBay, but struggle to find the time necessary to take pictures, list an item and then ship it to the purchaser. Through the Trading Assistant Program, entrepreneurs can implement their own eBay sales force.

Trading Assistants are experienced eBay sellers who handle every aspect of selling items on eBay for an agreed-upon fee. Some Assistants add the fees charged by eBay into their overall service costs. For sellers to become Trading Assistants, they must be experienced and active eBay sellers, have a feedback score of at least 50 and at have least 97 percent positive feedback. Visit http://pages.ebay.com/ta to learn more. —*S.C.*

3. CERTIFIED PROVIDER PROGRAM: There are two types of certified providers—Certified Service Providers and Certified Solution Providers. Service Providers offer nontechnical services, such as helping with listing strategy, responding to buyer inquiries, providing recommendations on the best way to sell on eBay and designing templates. Solution Providers help with technical issues, such as integration with the eBay platform and custom software development. By participating in the Certified Provider Program, members increase their visibility by serving as a sales channel, consultant or development team.

How do you know if your expertise fits with what eBay is looking for in its certified providers? eBay has a list on its site at http://developer.ebay.com/certifiedprovider, which includes marketplace strategy consulting, product sourcing, inventory management, fulfillment and logistics, transaction management, outsourced customer support, merchandising design and creative services, plus many others. —*S.C.*

GLOSSARY

IT MAY SOUND GREEK TO YOU NOW, BUT TO SUCCEED ON EBAY, YOU NEED TO KNOW THESE TERMS.

ABOUT ME: An eBay page that you create for free to tell your customers about your merchandise and selling terms and conditions

ACCOUNT STATUS: A running list of your Seller's Account activity and information, including fees, payments, refunds, fee credits and your current balance

ADVANCED SEARCH: A link to a search form on top of every eBay page. You can search for items by seller, item number, titles and descriptions, and search completed listings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BOARD: A special online bulletin board where eBay posts timely information and updates; regular eBay users should check this board daily.

AUCTION-STYLE LISTING: A typical auction-style listing works this way: The seller offers one or more items and sets a starting price; buyers visit the listing and bid on the item during the online auction's duration; when the auction-style listing ends, the high bidder (or bidders) buys the item from the seller for the high bid.

AVERAGE SELLING PRICE (ASP): The average price for all items sold during a particular time frame, usually calculated for a specific category or a single seller's sales

BEST OFFER: Allows sellers to receive price-based offers from buyers that may be accepted at the seller's discretion. The feature is available for listings in the Fixed-Price format, and once the price is accepted by the seller, the listing immediately closes. Each Best Offer is binding, just like a bid, and is good for 48 hours.

BID: The amount a buyer is willing to spend on an item for sale in an auction-style listing. Commonly referred to as a maximum bid, you enter this in the "Bid Amount" box in the item listing. By doing so, you commit to buy an item if you are the winning bidder.

BID CANCELLATION: The cancellation of a bid by a buyer or a seller

BID HISTORY: The bid history is a link within the seller's item listing or "My eBay" page that shows all the bids placed on a seller's item in an auction-style listing. It will show User ID, bid amount and time of bid.

BID INCREMENT: The amount by which a bid is increased each time the current bid is outdone

BID RETRACTION: The withdrawal of a bid; bid retractions are rarely allowed on eBay.

BIDDER SEARCH: A search for all the items on which a particular user has placed bids

BIDDING: The act of placing a bid on a listed item

BUY IT NOW (BIN): An option for buyers and sellers to sell or purchase at a fixed price. This type of listing offers buyers a chance to buy an item without bidding. It can be offered within an auction-style listing as an alternative to bidding, or by itself in a Fixed-Price listing.

CERTIFIED SOLUTION PROVIDER: Third-party software developers that have met specific criteria and compliance standards set by eBay

CHAT ROOMS: A casual setting within the eBay Community where users can talk with each other online

CLOSED ITEM LISTING: Notes a listing that has ended. If the item sold, there is important information (also found in My eBay) about payments, shipping and the buyer.

COMMIT TO BUY: A commitment by the buyer to pay for the item (should the buyer win it)

COMMUNITY: eBay's term for its members; also a place on eBay where users can chat. Areas include discussion boards, groups, Answer Center and chat rooms.

COMPLETED LISTINGS SEARCH: Information on items whose listings have ended in the last few weeks, accessible through the "Advanced Search" page

CONFIRMED ADDRESS: An address verified by PayPal as the credit card holder's billing address

DISCUSSION BOARDS: Part of the eBay Community section where users can discuss any eBay-related topic with other members via posting

DROP-SHIPPING: A type of retailing where the eBay seller does not keep goods in stock but instead passes the customer's order and shipment details to the wholesaler, who then dispatches the goods to the customer directly. The retailer makes their profit on the difference between the wholesale and retail price.

DUTCH AUCTION: When a seller has two or more identical items offered in the same auction-style listing; also known as a Multiple Item Auction

EBAY AFFILIATE PROGRAM: Pays internet publishers, webmasters and other online partners to drive new users to eBay. Affiliates promote eBay with banners, text links and other innovative tools, such as the Editor Kit and the Flexible Destination Tool. In return, they receive commissions.

EBAY MOTORS: Section specially designed for selling cars, trucks, motorcycles, and parts and accessories

EBAY SHIPPING CALCULATOR: Inserts a calculator into a seller's listing that will tell buyers how much shipping will cost them, based on criteria set by the seller

EBAY STORES: Venue to sell add-ons and deep inventory from a seller's own store

EBAY TOOLBAR: A downloadable tool for your web browser so you can keep track of your items at a glance and protect your account

EBAY UNIVERSITY: Instructor-led courses taught by eBay experts in major cities around the country instructing people how to sell on eBay

EDUCATION SPECIALIST PROGRAM: Allows eBay users to teach others how to sell on eBay using eBay University materials

FEATURED LISTING: A marketing service provided by eBay that gives listings extra exposure in the "Featured" sections at the top of listings pages

FEEDBACK: For each transaction, the buyer and seller are allowed to rate each other by leaving feedback. Each feedback item consists of a rating (positive, negative or neutral) and a short comment. These ratings are used to determine individual member profiles. Feedback can be viewed by other members to check on the reputation of a potential trading partner.

FEEDBACK FORUM: Place where you leave or check a user's feedback

FINAL VALUE FEE (FVF): Percentage of an item's selling price that is paid to eBay

FINAL VALUE FEE CREDIT: Under certain circumstances, sellers may request a Final Value Fee Credit. For example, sellers can request full credit if a buyer backed out and did not pay for the item.

FIXED PRICE: Sets the price for selling one or more items instantly

FLAT SHIPPING RATE: A flat rate sellers charge for an item no matter where the buyer lives (as opposed to calculating shipping costs). By providing a flat shipping rate, sellers may offer discounts on shipping when multiple items are purchased.

FORMATS: eBay offers a variety of selling formats, such as auction-style and Fixed-Price, to help sellers have the most successful listings possible.

GALLERY PICTURE: For 35 cents, sellers can add a thumbnail picture of their item that will appear next to the item in the search results.

GIFT ICON: Icon added during the listing process to let buyers know the item would make a great gift. Sellers using this icon should be willing to offer one of the following: gift-wrapping/card, express shipping or shipping to the gift recipient. The cost to have the gift icon next to your listing is 25 cents.

GROSS MERCHANDISE VOLUME (GMV): eBay's term for total sales for active listings or of all the items sold

ID VERIFY: Establishes proof of identity, helping others trust you as a seller or buyer. ID Verified users can buy with eBay's Buy It Now feature (where offered), bid above $15,000, and sell in Fixed-Price format.

IMMEDIATE PAYMENTS: Sellers who set a Buy It Now price for their item can require the buyer to pay immediately using PayPal. Sellers might use this feature if they're selling a time-sensitive item (for example, concert tickets).
INSERTION FEE: The nonrefundable fee charged by eBay to post a listing
INTERNET MARKETING: Any online advertising, such as banner ads, paid search and e-mail
ITEM LISTING: Information about a seller's item posted on eBay
ITEM SPECIFICS: Item specifics (such as shoe size and color) let sellers add standardized details that help make the listing easy to find. This gives buyers an easy and fast way to search for the item using Product Finder, and makes the basic facts about the seller's item clear and accessible in the listing.
LEARNING CENTER: A collection of educational tours and tutorials that teach people how to use eBay
MATCHING CATEGORIES: A way to narrow search results by choosing a category that matches the item a person is looking for; for example, "Books"
MAXIMUM BID: The maximum amount a buyer is willing to bid and pay for an item in a specific auction-style listing
MINIMUM BID: The lowest amount that can be entered as a bid for a specific auction-style listing
MINT: A subjective term used to describe an item in perfect condition
MULTIPLE ITEM AUCTION: See Dutch Auction.
MY EBAY: A personal dashboard that shows all of a person's activity on eBay, including purchases and sales. It is free; every person registered on eBay has this page.
NATURAL SEARCH: There are two main search classifications: natural search and paid search. While paid search refers to all pay-per-click advertising (such as Google AdWords and Overture), natural search refers to all unpaid search results based on relevance.
ONLINE AUCTION: Lets bidders compete for your item
ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ODR): Through third-party provider SquareTrade, users with disputes can request the services of a professional mediator, who can assist users in finding a mutually acceptable resolution.
OPENING VALUE: Another term for a starting price
OUTBID: A bidder is outbid when another bidder has placed a higher maximum bid than theirs.
PAID SEARCH: Paying a search engine for a position in search results. Sellers may buy keywords on search engines, such as Google, and their website will appear in the search results.
PAYPAL: An online payment service that allows sellers to accept credit card and bank account payments from buyers
PAYPAL BUYER CREDIT: A new funding-source option for U.S. buyers. This funding option may be used to send money to any PayPal Business or Premier Account. Sellers who qualify to offer promotional financing will see the offer in the eBay "Sell Your Item" form as they list their product.
PAYPAL BUYER PROTECTION: Provides free coverage up to $1,000 when a buyer uses PayPal to pay for a qualified listing on eBay
PAYPAL SELLER PROTECTION POLICY: Protects sellers against fraudulent buyers by providing up to $5,000 in annual chargeback protection at no additional cost when sellers follow the Seller Protection Policy guidelines
POWERSELLER: eBay top sellers who sustain a consistently high volume of monthly sales and a high level of total feedback, with a 98 percent or better positive rating from other eBay users; starts with Bronze and goes up to Titanium for the highest level of sales
PRIVATE LISTING: A type of eBay listing where the bidders' User IDs are not disclosed on the listing page
PROHIBITED ITEMS: Items not allowed to be sold on eBay. Sellers are responsible for checking if their item is allowed on eBay by reviewing Rules & Policies in the "Help Topics" section of Help.
PROXY BIDDING: A feature that allows you to enter the maximum amount you're willing to pay for an item; the eBay system automatically places bids on your behalf, increasing your bid as necessary by standard increments to maintain your high-bid position.
REGISTRATION: Needed to buy and sell on eBay. Users provide basic contact information, which is kept private.
RESELLER MARKETPLACE: A new eBay marketplace for PowerSellers to acquire inventory for resale
RESERVE PRICE: A hidden minimum amount the seller is willing to accept for a listed item
RESTRICTED ITEMS: Items that have restrictions for selling on eBay, but are not completely prohibited. Sellers are responsible for checking if their item is allowed on eBay by going to Rules & Policies in the "Help Topics" section of Help.
SALES REPORTS: Help sellers track key performance metrics so they can determine areas of opportunity and areas needing improvement
SEARCH OPTIMIZATION: Making sure a seller's eBay Store has appropriate keywords in the description so that items will appear when someone does an internet search on the item. (See Natural Search.)
SECOND CHANCE OFFER: A seller's Second Chance Offer to a bidder other than the auction's winner, which a seller can offer when the winning bidder in an auction fails to pay for the item or the seller has a duplicate item for sale but hasn't chosen to run a Multiple Item Auction
SECURITY & RESOLUTION CENTER: A page on eBay where users learn about trading safely. It's also the place to

go when you have an issue you need to resolve.

SELLER'S ACCOUNT: The account users are given when they register on eBay as a seller

SELLING MANAGER AND SELLING MANAGER PRO: Tools that allow sellers to perform all their listing and sales-related activities from one location in My eBay

SELLING RESOURCES: The page shown when you click on the "Sell" link at the top of any eBay page. Contains a host of selling information, such as how to put an item up for sale and tools to make the listing process easier

SHILL BIDDING: The practice of deliberately placing bids to artificially raise the price of an auction item. Shill bidding is not allowed on eBay and is illegal in many jurisdictions.

SHIPPING CENTER: A page on eBay with information to make shipping eBay items easier

SITE MAP: An organized list noting where users can find information on eBay, accessed by a link at the top of any eBay page

SNIPING: Placing a bid in the closing minutes or seconds of a listing

SOLUTIONS DIRECTORY: Features eBay and third-party software and services designed to improve productivity on eBay. Each software application listed in the Solutions Directory is technically compliant with eBay.

SPAM: Unsolicited commercial e-mail

SPOOF E-MAIL: A suspicious-looking e-mail that appears to be from eBay or PayPal asking you for personal or financial information. Do not respond, and report these to either spoof@ebay.com or spoof@paypal.com.

STARTING PRICE: The price at which bidding on an item begins; also, the lowest price a seller is willing to accept unless you have specified a Reserve Price

THIRD-PARTY PROVIDER: Usually software or service providers that develop programs to help eBay sellers be more productive

TRADING ASSISTANT: Experienced eBay sellers who sell items on eBay for others for a fee

TURBO LISTER: A free listing tool from eBay that helps you list many items at a time

UNPAID ITEM: When a buyer or winning bidder commits to buy, but does not go through with payment. After you report the Unpaid Item, you can relist it or try making a Second Chance Offer.

USER ID: A user's identity on eBay

VERIFIED RIGHTS OWNER PROGRAM (VERO): Lets owners of intellectual property rights request the removal of listings on eBay that offer items or contain materials that infringe on their rights. This helps protect members of the eBay Community from purchasing items that may be counterfeit or otherwise unauthorized.

WANT IT NOW: A new format on eBay enabling buyers to let sellers know what they are looking for and allowing sellers to respond to buyers with eBay listings ■

To the Letter

Stay in the know with these commonly used eBay acronyms.

BIN:	Buy It Now
FS:	Factory sealed
GU:	Gently used
GW:	Gently worn
MWT:	Mint with tag(s)
NBW:	Never been worn
NIB:	New in box
NR:	No reserve
NWT:	New with tag(s)
S/H:	Shipping and handling

INSIDE SCOOP *continued from page 39*

(14) DONATE TO A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.

Donate part of or the entire final sale price to your favorite nonprofit organizations. Support your community, and your charity listings will get additional visibility along with a blue-and-yellow ribbon icon. Search more than 5,000 charities at http://givingworks.ebay.com.

(15) BEWARE OF UNUSUAL BUYER REQUESTS.

To help protect yourself from potential fraud, be wary of buyers who have unusual requests. If buyers ask to send partial payments, consider that a warning sign.

(16) ASK EBAY CONSULTANTS FOR ADVICE.

Once you know how to sell on eBay and you've checked out the eBay Community, your head will be buzzing with new business ideas. Run your questions by the Seller OnRamp consultants (http://pages.ebay.com/startselling) for free advice on creating a profitable business on eBay.

(17) SUBSCRIBE TO *THE CHATTER.*

Every month, get feature articles, tips, helpful links and member interviews. Share your eBay story, and you may be next in the member spotlight (http://pages.ebay.com/community/chatter).

(18) SIGN UP FOR THE *POWERUP* NEWSLETTER.

Get advance notice of upcoming events and promotions by e-mail at http://pages.ebay.com/sellercentral/newsflash.html. You'll get a heads-up on free listing days, feature discounts, seller sweepstakes and more.

(19) DESIGN MARKETING MATERIALS TO PROMOTE YOUR STORE.

Get business cards, fliers, letterhead and envelopes to strengthen your Store's brand and invite offline shoppers to check it out. Download eBay's marketing templates for free (http://pages.ebay.com/storefronts/collateral.html) or visit NetPost Business Connect at www.usps.com/netpost to create and mail advertising and promotional messages to customers. ■

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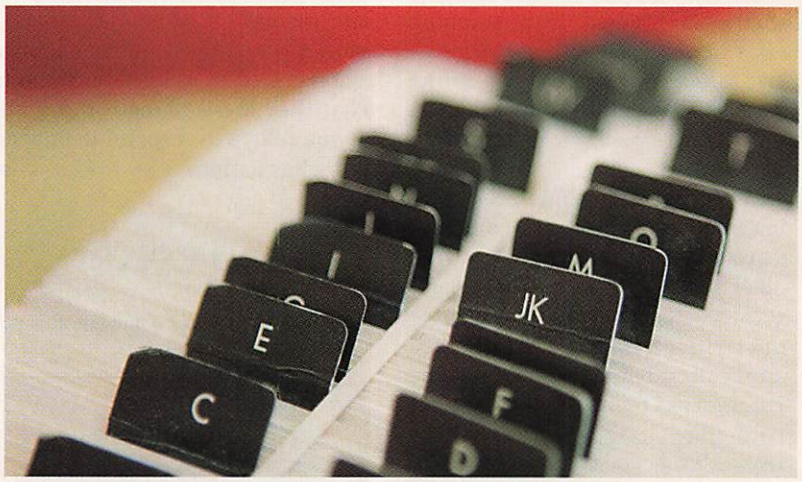

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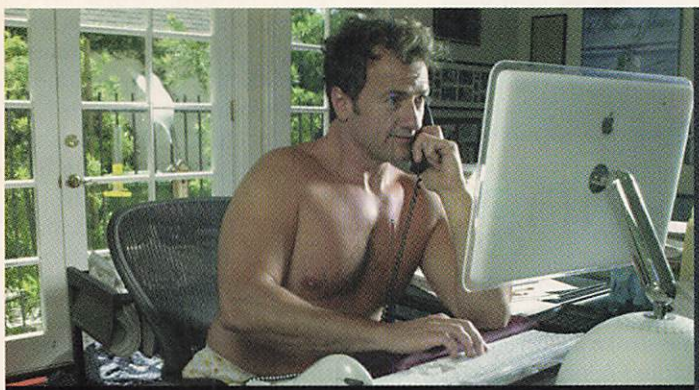

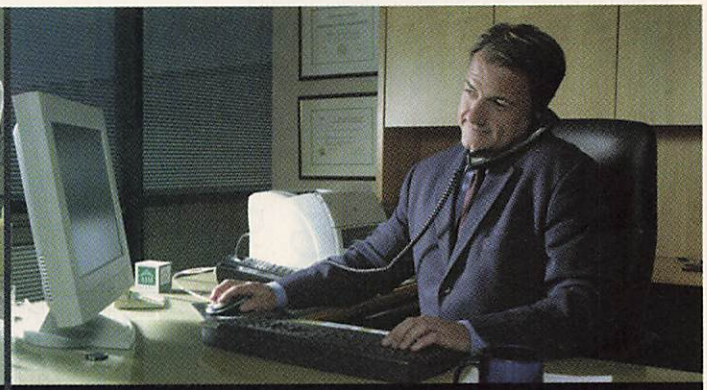

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Follow the leader: Chris Mitchell transformed his love of sports into a successful business on eBay—and now teaches others to follow suit.

Wheeling and Dealing

EBAY HELPED ONE MAN OVERCOME MAJOR HURDLES TO CREATE A LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD BASED ON HIS PASSION.

BY APRIL Y. PENNINGTON

Chris Mitchell's eBay days were far from over when he suffered a stroke in July 2002 that left him in a wheelchair. Mitchell had already been selling items from around his house in Modesto, California, for a year and a half and had grown quite fond of selling on eBay. He even kept his listings running as he headed to the hospital for what was slated to be a three- to five-day stay to correct a birth defect in his heart. "Little did I know I'd have a stroke and be in the hospital for a month and a half," recalls Mitchell, 39. It's unclear at what point the stroke occurred during his scheduled operation. "All I know is, when I got in the gurney, I was able to walk," says Mitchell. "But when I woke up in intensive care, I could not stand."

After the stroke, Mitchell had to hang up his eBay hat for about three months to recover from his medical problems, including a blood clot that landed him back in the hospital. But there was no way he was giving it up for good. "I've never let a disability stop me from doing what I wanted," explains Mitchell. "I was not going to let this stroke win. I was going to beat it and get back to as much of a normal life as I had before." It took him a year to get back to his previous eBay selling pace, due to fatigue and other issues. But eBay helped him tremendously during tough times. "It makes me feel like a productive member of society," says Mitchell. "I feel very independent, as I do almost everything for my business on eBay myself."

Mitchell had been helping his parents and friends sell on eBay, so he took the next step and became an eBay Trading Assistant in 2003. A die-hard baseball fan, he started focusing on sports memorabilia inventory in late 2003, including keychains, bobbleheads and license plates. Mitchell (eBay User ID: powerwheelerchris) often goes out looking for new inventory and loves to get out of the house. He has found that selling sports items lifts his spirits. "It gives me a lot of pride in what I do," he says.

Mitchell reached an even larger pool of eBay enthusiasts when he created a new course at Modesto Junior College. Teaching a hands-on course on eBay there since 2004, he offers insight based on his personal experience selling successfully on the site. He also became an Education Specialist Trained by eBay, giving him increased credibility and listing him in the eBay Education Specialist Directory. His first class was so popular, the college had to add two more classes that semester. The classes are typically full. Says Mitchell, "[eBay] allowed me to build a reputation."

Mitchell believes eBay has leveled the playing field for him, as buyers don't know he's disabled. However, it's clear that Mitchell has done his part in creating the life he enjoys. His triumph over adversity serves as inspiration—Mitchell's abilities far outweigh any disability he's faced. ■

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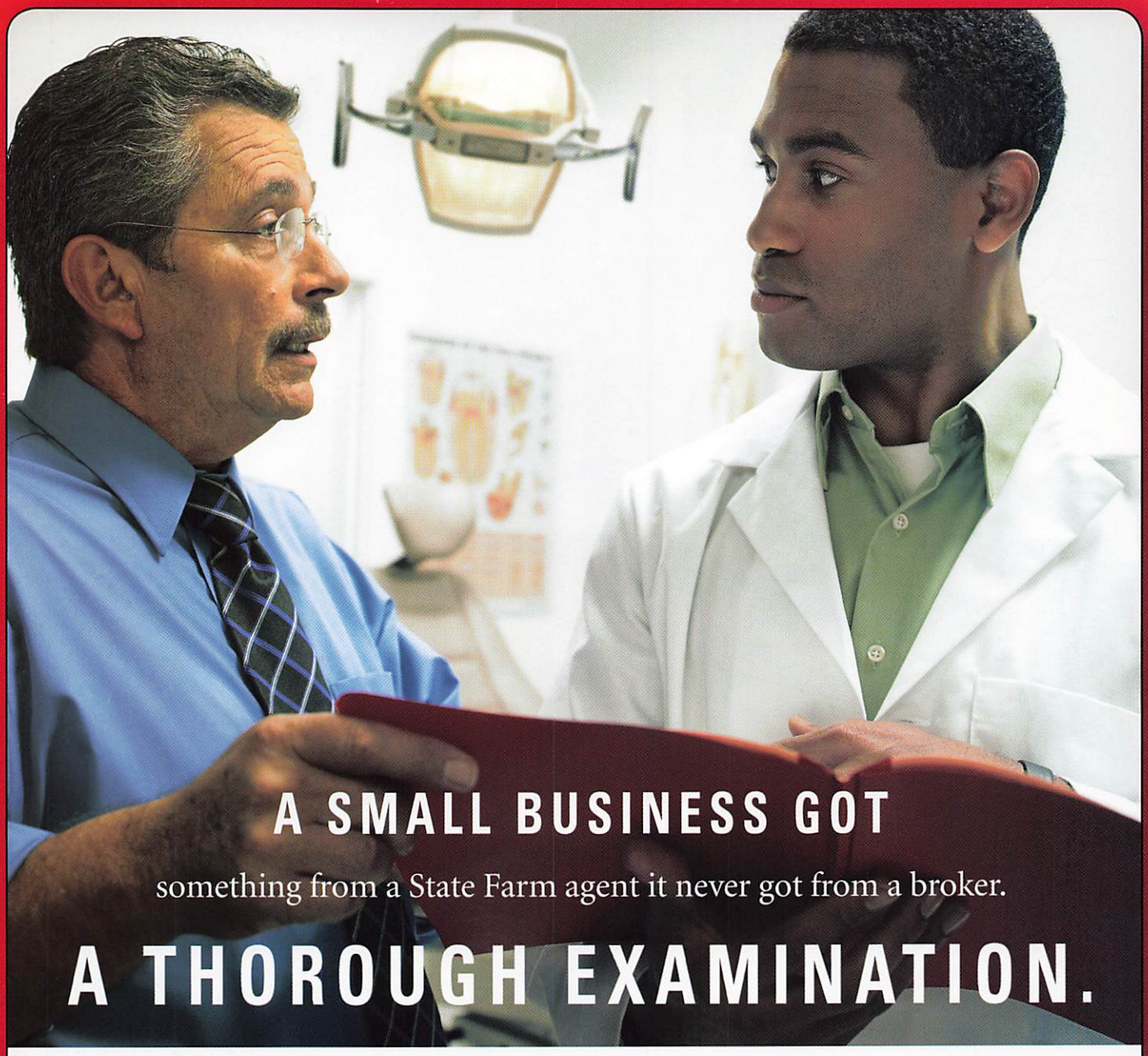

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